Golden Age collectors go...Catman crazy!

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

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COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

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ON THE COVER:
A close-up of *Catman Comics* #31 (Jun 1946). L.B. Coles superlative art contrasts opposing artistic elements... a spotlight battling the snow-filled darkness... and ten ferocious wolves threatening the feline images of Catman and Kitten.

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Issue Number #33, March 1996

PAT'S 60TH ANNIVERSARY?!

Since the inception of the original *CBM*, my long-time friend and fellow collector, Pat Calhoun, has been an integral part of the *CBM* project… and an enthusiastic supporter of our mutual "dream" of a national magazine for Golden Age and Silver Age collectors.

In that regard, *CBM* #33 is something of an anniversary for Pat and marks his 60th (count 'em 60!) regular article/column contribution over the last few years… in fact, at least one in every issue of every magazine of which I have been the editor. That includes all 21 issues of the original *CBM*, all 21 issues of *Overstreet's Comic Book Monthly*, all six issues of *Overstreet's Comic Book Quarterly*, and every Gemstone *CBM*, from #22 to the present. That's no small accomplishment and an amazing amount of research and writing, and especially on a "back-breaker" monthly schedule!

Pat also had articles published (as author or co-author) in the '92, '94, and '95 *Annual Price Guides*… and even penned articles for publications like the 1992 *San Diego Comic Con Program Book* on topics like "the History Of The Golden Age" and others. All these published articles and columns have made Pat Calhoun a familiar name in the world of collecting. In fact, many *CBM* readers have asked how our paths originally crossed (back in the olden days), so I thought I'd share the story.

I met Pat one Fall afternoon back in 1961. He and my brother, Lane, ended up in adjacent desks in Mrs. Weller's 4th grade class at Coronado Central Elementary School. After the usual get-acquainted chatter, the topic of comic books came up, and the next thing, Pat was over at our house pouring through the stacks of comics we had been purchasing regularly since 1956. Having just started 7th grade myself, I was skeptical that a 4th grader was worthy of looking through our precious treasures… but I soon changed my mind. As I watched Pat begin his examination of the closeted stacks of newsprint, I was struck by how careful he was with the comics… and how advanced his knowledge of them was. He organized and stacked, sorted and shuffled… and in a single afternoon had hundreds of unruly, undisciplined, and well loved comic books rearranged in tidy and organized stacks on the pine shelves at one end of my bedroom.

It wasn't long after that the trips to downtown San Diego began. We'd take the ferry from Coronado, walk through the freight yards, down Broadway, finally reaching comic collector paradise… Ye Old Book & Magazine Shoppe, Bargain Books, Lannings Book Store, and still further away 1822 5th Street (the store with no name, just an address). Each of those dusty and dingy pieces of the San Diego landscape was pure nirvana to us… and every "used" comic they had (and there were thousands upon untold thousands) was a mere 5¢ each.

There was no concern about value, condition, or investment… only the unbridled joy and exuberance of three kids searching out and finding comics they missed at the stands… and desperately wanted to read!

As the '60s whizzed by, we discovered comic fanzines, the Golden Age and EC, the hormone and pimple hell of puberty, girls, the space program, a little socio-political upheaval… but always with one thing that was constant, unchanging, and secure… our appreciation and love for comic books and comic collecting. The rest, as they say, is… uh, well… comic collecting history!

With all those adventures in mind, I congratulate you Pat on this special occasion for your amazing productivity, your great articles and columns, and for your unwavering loyalty to *CBM* and the hobby! I'm already looking forward to the next 60 installments of "Adventures Into Weird Words" by Pat S. Calhoun and the privilege of being your editor. That's because your "60th article anniversary" is more than just a publishing milestone.

For me, the body of your work is really a testament, of sorts, that speaks to everyone about loving the books for what they really mean to us. It reaffirms to the world that the essence of our four-color pastime is still, after all, just kids of all ages that simply love to read and collect comics for their own sake… and that the wonder comic books weave stay with us our entire lives.

Pat probably summed it up best a few years ago when he wrote… "Isn't that why we came here in the first place…"

So the next time your down this way, Pat, there are a few old book stores on Broadway we could check out… and I still have a closet full of old funny books I hope you'll help me sort. Best,

Gary

Gary M. Carter
Managing Editor

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A Giant Has Passed

When Phil Barnhart called to inform me of the death of Leonard Brandt Cole, the conversation ran rather short. As I had no idea of what to think or say. I still don't. Perhaps those thoughts and feelings will only come with the fullness of time. I am still overwhelmed by the enormity of his loss–to his family, his friends, his fans and, somewhere in there, to me.

The only thing I am sure of at this point is that a giant of the publishing industry has passed and will be missed. Only in William Gaines was there another like him–publisher, writer, artist, defender of freedom in thought and speech. His artistic ability was great, his renderings of natural subjects having no equal in the history of comics. He carried the easy confidence of a person who had known no failure in achievement, but was always generous in his dealings with others. He accomplishments and his life were, at the end, magnificent and complete. We shall not see his like again.

Scotty Moore, California

Far-Out Fascists

The excellent interview with CCA attorney Leonard Darvin and the edifying and scholarly piece on the defense of Dr. Wertham were exceptional examples of CBM's taking an even-handed approach to dealing with comics history. Talk about synchronicity! I'd just finished reading Peter David's column in CBG telling about the recent raid on and charges brought against Planet Comics in Oklahoma City for "distributing obscene material."

It would appear from your articles in CBM #29 that neither the CCA nor Dr. Wertham are the far-out fascists they have been painted to be by those who didn't want to "waste" time looking for the facts! Indeed, both would have seemed to have saved the comics industry from its own excesses in quest for the All Mighty...dollar, that is!

I speak only for myself when I say I am totally against censorship. Like "Dr. Quarter," I believe each individual should be responsible for their own actions and be willing to accept the consequences. The one exception is for children, who are the responsibility of the parents!

However, it is the responsibility of comics retailers to see that comics created for more "mature" readers-whose brains have already been "hard wired"- do not fall into the hands of our little kiddies. Retailers should be held accountable for that!

I found it not at all surprising that Dr. Quarter was a liberal, in the original, true sense of that term! However, he was anything but a "libertine." He obviously was able to make a distinction between liberty/freedom and sheer license! A distinction many today can't seem to grasp.

Without a sense of responsibility, true freedom is a mere delusion! Look where Russia is trying to go in terms of "freedom," and where America is coming from. Then ask yourself why both countries are where they are now, culturally!

The answer to "freedom" in the comics industry as elsewhere is found in a sense of individual responsibility, not license and anarchy.

Keep up the high quality of your magazine. Someone there sure seems to have a sense of responsibility. Best,

Harry W. Miller, Kentucky

Kudos

Got my latest issue of CBM, and it was terrific. The overall graphic quality of the magazine has really improved. Kudos to your staff for all their fine efforts.

Steve Carey, California

Thanks for your letter Steve, I'm looking forward to your next article.

Blew Me Away

Just recently started a subscription and I was amazed at how fast you've sent the first issue! Although I have no intention of ever selling my comics, it's still nice to know how much they are worth. The high quality of your magazine, along with the wealth of information you provide, guarantee that I'll be a reader for a long time to come.

Anyway, the main point of this letter is to order (if I can) a previous issue for a friend. The Steranko issue (#28) blew me away (he's always been my favorite artist) and I would like a copy to send to a friend. Thank you,

Eric G. Blackmore, Tennessee

All CBM back issues (beginning with #22) can be ordered for $7.50 each, postage paid. Make check or money orders payable to Gemstone Publishing Inc. Phone orders (Visa or MasterCard only) just call (619) 437-1996. Orders shipped within 48 hours.

Lost Larsons

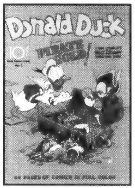
I read with great interest Pat Kochanek's analysis of the Larson collection. I commend him for his thoughtful analysis. I would, however, make some additional observations.

Pat states that the Larson collection ends with books cover dated September 1941. This is true for those books that were purchased by Joe Tricarichi. However, there are Larson copies that exist through November 1941.

After my article come out in late 1994, Larson's hometown newspaper in Nebraska asked if they could reprint it. I naturally gave my permission. About two weeks after the newspaper articles appeared, I received a letter from a boyhood friend of Larson's (Larson had even been his best man.). He had read with much interest my articles. It prompted an old memory. Recently, he had cleaned out his mother's house and discovered a box of his old comics. He remembered as a boy that Larson had given him comics after he was done with them. Sure enough he found six books with "Lamont" or "Larson" on them. He "wondered" if I "might" be interested in them. MIGHT BE!

As described none of the books sounded like they were in particularly good condition. However, driven by curiosity and this incredible quirk of luck that these books even existed, I dickered over a price and purchased the books. These books are Smash Comics #8 (Mar 1940), Feature Comics #34 (Jul 1940), Minute Man *(Continued on page 10)*

COMIC BOOKS WANTED



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Comics #2 (Sep 5/Dec 5, 1941) and Star Spangled Comics #2 (Nov 1941). These "lost Larsons" prompt several thoughts as to some of Pat's observations. There are, obviously, Larsons that were purchased after the September 1941 cover date. However, it is clear that at this point Larson lost interest. Of the six lost Larsons four are from the very end of his comic reading career. The fact that he gave away the books is evidence of that. He may have been more willing to part with is comic books at this point. However, since two of the books are from 1940, the "gaps" in the Larson collection may be attributed as much to the common boyhood trait of sharing books as to the possible distribution quirks of the comic books themselves. The more intriguing question is if Larson gave away any other books. Are there more "lost Larsons" out there waiting to be found?

Jon Berk, Connecticut

Seen As Bizarre

Loved your October issue! As a collector in his 40s, and an historian of science, I really appreciate articles on comics history. I'm trying to discover who in North America is actively doing historical/archival research and writing. (My reading and collecting these days is focusing on the area of science, science fiction, and superheroes in the GA and SA in support of a future book-length study. My principle interest is Batman, but other DC heroes, early 1960s Marvel superheroes, and sci-fi comics and pulps have captured my attention. I'm slowly gathering names of people here in Canada interested in conducting an academic conference on the subject...)

Anyway, your magazine is turning out to be a great source of information and contacts. After a 30-year collecting hiatus, I'm furiously playing catch-up. There still are gaps in my knowledge (e.g. is there some organization or 'zines or newsletters, or indexes devoted to Batman? I'd like to know!). At this point, I feel pretty stupid when it comes to the history-of-comics scene in the States. I'd like to know a lot more about who's doing historical work, from details about comic creators, production, and publishing, to the social origins and meanings of comics and connections to popular and political culture. My interests are seen as bizarre by most of my academic colleagues, and time-wasting by administrators, so I'm feeling fairly isolated. That's where you come in.

Finding CBM up here has been hit-or-miss, even in the specialty shops. Many times I have ordered CBM through various retailers, and most of the time suppliers don't fill these orders: frustration all around. So I'm finally going to the source and requesting a subscription directly from you. If you can also supply info on ordering back issues, I'd appreciate it. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Professor Paul Fayter, Canada

Hooded Horseman Proof?

I'm seeking help from readers regarding the old ACG western title, "The Hooded Horseman." This is one of the most confusing titles from the 1950s.

The title began when the Hooded Horseman, who was featured in "Blazing West", received his own title with No. 21, Jan-Feb 1952, when Blazing West No. 20 became Hooded Horseman No. 21. The Overstreet Price Guide entry carries Blazing West to No. 22, which is incorrect, but Overstreet correctly lists Hooded Horseman beginning with No. 21. Hooded Horseman continued through No. 27. Feb 1953 (all seven issues are shown in Gerber Photo Journal after beginning with the entry for Blazing West).

When ACG discontinued its horror title "Out of the Night" with No. 17, it became "The Hooded Horseman" with No. 18, Nov-Dec 1954. The title continued until No. 22, Aug-Sept 1955, when I believe it was discontinued. (Gerber shows only No. 18-20 of the second run.) Over the course of many years I have found all 12 known issues of the first and second sets.

However, Overstreet long has listed it as continuing through No. 27, June-July 1956. I have never found any evidence of any 1955-56 series continuing beyond No. 22. I would think that I would have found evidence of the second versions of No. 23-27 by now, if indeed they exist. I have seen many copies of this comic over the years, but it seems to end with the Aug-Sept 1955 issue. Can anyone help with eyewitness proof? Thanks,

Michelle Nolan, California

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I Must Inquire

Must say that I am very enthusiastic about your publication. Not (yet) being of the income bracket to go out and build a Golden Age comics collection, I can enjoy the knowledge of other collectors by way of the research that is proffered monthly. This being said, I must inquire:

1) Has the Phantom Lady series ever been reprinted? I would thoroughly enjoy reading about her exploits, but I also need to save my money (I am getting married soon!). If her series has been reprinted, where can I get it? If it hasn't, then whom do I have to beg? Your Phantom Lady article in CBM #25 has inspired me!

2) The Captain America legend has it that Bucky died while clinging to an airplane bound for destruction that indeed, did explode. Did this ever happen in an actual comic book? Did it happen in the Golden Age Cap series? I am confused about this one. I own Avengers #4 (Cap's Silver Age revival) but there the tale is only "retold". Straighten me out on this one!

Thanks to the whole CBM staff! You people do great work. This publication fills a necessary void in today's "what's hot du jour" world. I look forward to CBM and Simpsons Comics with excited anticipation every month!

Brian St. John, Colorado

1) See Bill Black's ad in CBM #25.
2) I'm not sure either… maybe some CBM reader can enlighten us both. Thanks for some great inquiries, Brian.

P.S. Another Witness Book

Adding to the voices in your letter columns, we're also glad Comic Book Marketplace is back again. Responding to two letters written by Colin Alscher and your responses, I have the following remarks.

First, thanks for suggesting to reader Francis Litzinger that he check into AC Comics for our Golden Age reprints. Besides the many stories we have reprinted on Good Girl art in our Good Girl Art Quarterly series and Jungle Girl series, we now have the TPB series Golden Age Greats which provides Golden Age reprints of stories with male and female characters as well as articles about the publishers, artists, and characters covered in these volumes. The title is bimonthly and has been catching on with readers and retailers. We just published volume six and sales were the highest yet, although these sales are still very modest.We are receiving help from some of the most knowledgeable people and welcome volunteers for this project which we feel provides an important service in preserving the history of the American comic book medium.

Since Marvel and DC Comics have the capability of preserving their own history, we are concentrating on other Golden Age publishers to assure that this material is also made available to future generations. Most readers cannot afford to collect the "real" Golden Age comics and reprints are very valuable to them. In addition, many retailers tell us that reprints turn many a comic reader into a Golden and/or Silver Age collector. You aren't going to shell out the big bucks until you're sure you're going to like this material.

Those helping us with this project are as devoted as I am to keeping this classic material alive. Greg Theakston is providing some of the restoration with his "Theakstonizing"

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process, while we do other material the only way it can be done…that is by dropping out as much of the faded and yellowed color as we can and basically retracing the linework. The AC staff that is trained in the tradition of brush work does the restoration…primarily myself and on occasion Mark Heike and Chris Allen lend a hand. Besides myself and my associate editor Mark Heike, writing and reference is being provided by many people, including R.C. Harvey, Ed Lane (Bob Powell expert), Dick Ayers, Hames Ware, Roy Thomas, and Paul Power (conducting interviews with Bob Lubbers and George Evans) and others. Many collectors help by locating hard to find stories

Regarding Collin's comments on your brief interview with Dick Ayers in issue #27 (covered in your Vince Sullivan article by Pat Calhoun) I have to tell you that Dick Ayers has indeed drawn many a lovely lady, although this did not happen during the Golden Age or Silver Age of comics… but in the present. Dick drew many a story for AC Comics starring lovely ladies of the Femforce and their supporting cast of female and male heroes. This included our Vault heroines (Golden Age characters preserved in Dr. Weir's Vault until needed in the present) Therefore, we have Dick Ayers drawing Miss Masque, Miss Victory, Yankee Girl, Kitten, AC's version of Fox's Phantom Lady that we call the Blue Bulleteer etc., as well as contemporary characters. Dick has said to us, on more than one occasion, that he was thrilled with the opportunity to draw the superheroine, something he never did before!

We started out working with Dick thinking what a joy to have him reprise some of the old characters he had worked on in their true identity, such as The Ghost Rider a name that is now used by Marvel Comics in that completely new creation as the motorcycle riding Johnny Blaze. We brought back this character as Rex Fury, the Haunted Horseman. We had him work on The Vault heroes and heroines, but it wasn't long before he let us know he didn't dwell just in the past.

The next thing we knew, he jumped into the middle of the contemporary Femforce, rendering such characters as our very 1990's RAD, the 80's and 90's Ms. Victory's evil persona! I enclose some of AC Comics' publications with Dick Ayers pencils for your enjoyment, along with a photo of Dick and myself in front of a sketch Dick did for me on a visit to my office.

Also, I enjoyed the Vince Sullivan, Magazine Enterprises article and I would like to point out that in Golden Age Greats Volume Seven (available in January) is a tribute to Magazine Enterprises western genre and contains interviews with those you talked with in your article, with a focus on their contributions to that company's western publications

P.S. I wanted to let your readers know of three additional Witness appearances not mentioned in CBM #27. The original costumed Witness also appeared in Mystic Comics #8 (Mar 1942, "Gems Of Doom"); Mystic Comics #9 (May 1942, untitled), and the late '40's version also appeared in Captain America # 72 (May 1949, "The Magnificent Failure!") a 4 pg. story signed by writer Stan Lee!

Bill Black. Florida

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Action
38 VG $200
Adventure
101 VG $180
121 VG $100
188 VG $85
200 GD/VG $110
All American
45 GD/VG $175
79 FN/VF $200
All Flash
20 VG/FN $175
Batman
36 VG $160
39 VG $210
Detective
113 VG/FN $260
135 VG $145
175 GD/VG $95
209 VG $115
Superman
25 GD/VG $160
World's Finest
20 FN/VF $325
23 VG/FN $175
41 FN/VF (tape) . . . $200
42 GD $75
Comic Cavalcade
52 VG $34
54 VG $34
58 VG $36
Flippity and Flop
3 GD/VG $12
Frontier Fighters
3 VG $50
7 VG $55
Pat Boone
4 VF $140
Jimmy Wakely
9 VF/NM $180
10 VF $160
11 FN $75
12 VF/NM $160
Leading
50 VG/FN $14
Real Fact
5 GD $110
13 VG FN $110
16 FN/VF $125
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42 VG/FN $25
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7 VG/FN $35
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Lost Forever?

Picked up CBM #27, really enjoyed your magazine. It is so nice to see a magazine dedicated to the Golden and Silver Age of Comics!

Is there anyone out there preserving the Golden & Silver Age Comics on either CD ROM or microfiche? It would be a great tragedy to see these great classics lost forever due to wear and tear of time. Someone needs to start preserving them now, for future generations to see how the history of comics evolved.

Some of these classics should even be on the Internet for people to download for a fee Most of the copyrights on these classics expired anyway and the purchasing public would probably really enjoy being able to download some of these classics to fill in gaps in their collections.

Hollywood lost vintage films due to the passing of time, we who enjoy comics should make an effort in preserving the history of Golden & Silver Age Comics by scanning them on our personal computers and saving them on CD ROMS or placing them on the Internet for other people to enjoy.

Continue with your great magazine. I will be looking forward to your next issue.

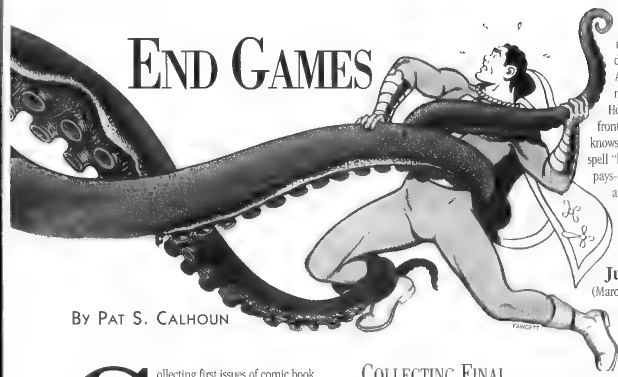
Paul Dale Roberts, California

All great ideas, Paul… I know many who share your viewpoint. Thanks for supporting CBM.

Ignored Niche

What a thrill and true delight to have come across CBM! As a fan of the late, lamented Overstreet (Golden Age and Silver Age) Comic Book Quarterly, your magazine fills a very important and too often ignored niche in the hobby… that is the more serious student of the *(Continued on page 68)*

END GAMES



By Pat S. Calhoun

Collecting first issues of comic book titles is fun, but collecting final issues is also fascinating- especially if they happen to be the swan songs of long-running titles. In the majority of cases the latter numbers of these magazines contain much experimentation and deviation from established patterns. The three titles up for perusal here all featured format changes that enhanced the product but (apparently) not enough to turn sales around.

Although there are a number of possible reasons for a veteran title to cease publication, most of them boil down to variations of "it's not selling like it used to". But, for at least one of the entries that follow, the axe fell with help from outside forces, when the censorship movement of the late 1940s gathered enough strength (by 1953) to put some writing on the wall that the comic book industry was about to be squeezed hard and fast.

Ace Comics #151 (October/November 1949) is the last of the eight Phantom covers (#144-151) that closed out the run with elegant hero art of a bold and colorful design. David McKay was one of the earliest comic book publishers, back when newspaper reprint comics were the norm. But by the late 1940s most comics were original material, and the reprint books and companies were a fading minority.

...Collecting Final Issues is fascinating... especially if they happen to be the Swan Songs of Long-Running titles.

The eight pages of Phantom strips finish the "Dragon of Wambo Wambo" story as the monster is revealed to be a machine worked by two escaped Nazi war criminals (with the help of Devil, the Phantom's trained wolf). After some laughs with the Katzenjamer Kids, four handsome but static pages of Jungle Jim, and two pages of Blondie Sundays- Alex Raymond's Rip Kirby wraps things up with a luxurious eleven pages. This is the middle part of an ongoing story, but the writing and art have such depth as to make it rewarding reading despite the incompleteness. An old flame of Rip's is making her way in Hollywood when she's confronted by a blackmailer who knows enough about her past to spell "bad publicity" unless she pays- and she's broke. Will Rip arrive before her career is ruined? Well, one won't find out by waiting for *Ace* #152, that's for sure.

Jumbo #167 (March 1953) featured the Ghost Gallery on the cover, in an attempt to attract horror fans during the days when that genre was a big seller on the newsstands. This supernatural series had been around since #42 (August 1942), but never as the cover star. To say that Fiction House got scared out of business by the impending comic censorship legislation would be an overstatement, but it didn't help. Certainly the Fiction House cover strategy of lushly-rendered females in peril (or as protagonist) "on land and sea and in the air" as they used to say- would not be permissible if the comics had to pass scrutiny by an organization whose express purpose was to tone down violence and sex. Still, arguments that blame the "Code" must be mollified by the understanding that this was when TV was making its first inroads on the "Golden Age of printed material". Pulp magazines were definitely dying, and in the case of Fiction House- a big pulp publisher- this must have had an impact on their decision to stop producing comics.

The *Jumbo* line-up: jungle heroine, ghost story, crime story, space opera, and a four-page biography of Hernando Cortez! - its contents are a perfect example of why these kinds of titles are called anthologies. "Cult of the Clawmen", the Ghost Gallery offering, is an enjoyable but predictable tale of were-leopards and their beautiful queen. The sci-fi and crime tales fill their

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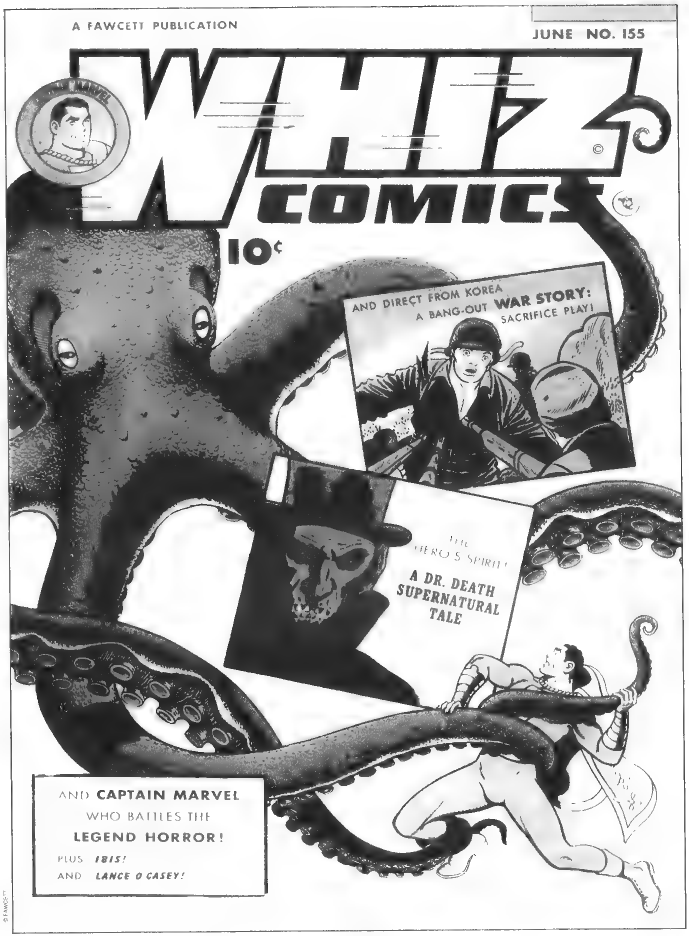
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THE HERO'S SPIRIT
A DR. DEATH SUPERNATURAL TALE
AND CAPTAIN MARVEL
WHO BATTLES THE
LEGEND HORROR!
PLUS IBIS!
AND LANCE O'CASEY!

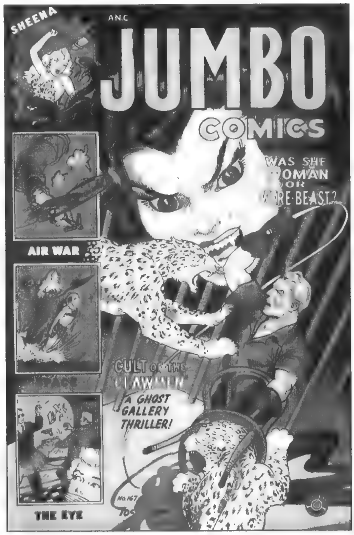
slots adequately, and the Cortez bio is excellently drawn and doesn't play down the enormous cruelty and callousness of the New World explorers. Sheena, Queen of the Jungle, closes the book with a six-page "Night Hunt" full of killer cats and pythons and a couple of white poachers who'll stop at nothing in their quest for ivory. The voluptuous Sheena had as much wisdom and courage as she did curves; and in my opinion is the greatest heroine in the history of comics.

Whiz Comics #155 (June 1953) also contains a nod to the horror genre, a weirdie narrated by Shelly Moldoff's Dr. Death. It also features the last appearance of Captain Marvel in the magazine that introduced him fourteen years before. Fawcett's getting out of the comic book business is usually seen as following from DC's winning the protracted lawsuit against the "Big Red Cheese", and while it was a factor, Fawcett also judged that the comic market would not stay as large as it was and they were dead right.

"The Legend Horror" pits Captain Marvel against the ancient Kraken. He cleverly deals with this monstrous octopus-like thing by tossing it into the desert in a seven-page story that's still got some of the old verve. Then Dr. Death does his bit, with a tepid tale of vengeance from beyond the grave. After five pages of salty seafaring with Lance O'Casey, Prince Ibis waves his Ibis-stick around to demonstrate just how quaint the magician genre was. Those were the days- when it was still possible to believe in the fantasy of the power of muttered mumbo-jumbo. This exercise in whimsy is followed by an ultra-realistic Korean War yarn titled "Sacrifice Play."

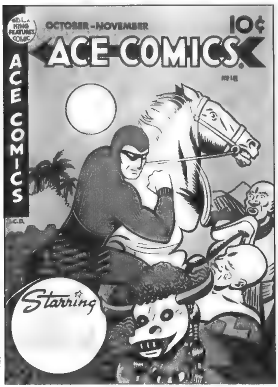
All three of these titles were the "flagships" of their respective publishers, and all three of the companies left the comic book industry soon after shutting them down. An interesting aspect of this "last issue" collecting is that the final numbers of a title can be among the scarcest in the run. And in the three cases here it wasn't lack of quality that caused the title's expiration but the changing tastes of the audience. So hunting these down is a thrill. . . and consuming them a delight! ■

JUMBO COMICS #167 (Mar 1953) Sheena grapples with a serpent in the upper-left corner, while the Ghost Gallery cover caters to the horror-hungry clientele.



WHIZ COMICS #155 (Jun 1953) Superhero, supernatural, and a direct-from-Korea war story headline, the last hurrah of one of the great Golden Age anthology titles.

ACE COMICS #151(Oct/Nov 1949) shows a "sleepy" native getting a skull mark on his jaw from the Phantom, riding in on his horse, Hero.



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EXIST... OR NOT EXIST?

BY MICHELLE NOLAN

THAT IS THE QUESTION! A SURVEY OF POSSIBLY NON-EXISTENT 1940S AND 1950S COMICS!

Here's our chance to have some fun and perhaps add to the body of knowledge about old comic books. As many *CBM* readers know, I usually write about comics that do exist, however obscure. This month's column is primarily about issues that don't exist... or at least we think don't exist! With the invaluable aid of Southern California collector and indexer Dan Stevenson, I recently completed a survey of possibly non-existent 1940's and 50's comics. I didn't get the work completed in time to submit it for the first *Overstreet Comic Book Price Update*, and I doubt that it can be included in the 26th annual edition of the *Guide*. But the lists you see here are presented for consideration for *Guide* #27... and perhaps you can help make the information more complete!

By no means do I claim the accompanying lists are necessarily totally comprehensive. They are probably other pre-1960 comics that don't exist but remain listed. But this is the best list Stevenson and I have been able to put together as of the end of 1995. I'm hoping the readers of *CBM* will let me know if any of these comics do exist. Frankly, I'll be quite surprised if many of them do... but you never, never know.

For example, I would never have guessed after all these years that there was a complete, undiscovered story by Frank Frazetta waiting to be revealed, but there was! I'll bet few collectors are aware that *Monkeyshines* #19 (March, 1948) from Ace Publications has a five-page Frazetta funny animal story! I didn't know either, until Jim Vadeboncoeur made the historic Frazetta discovery recently entitled "Pete the Peke." Naturally, I scoured every catalog I could find to see if I could find a copy too. I did... for the $4 value listed in the *Price Guide*! So did Bud Plant, who, along with Jim is a Frazetta enthusiast of long standing. With this writing, now the whole world knows... so *Monkeyshines* #19 won't be available for long!

Jim's discovery brought back memories of the pre-Price Guide days of more than 25 years ago, when only a select few collectors knew what the "Gold" in Golden Age sometimes really meant! The reason for this digression, though, is to point out that however infrequently discoveries are being made, they are indeed, still out there TO BE MADE!

Now... can anyone find a *Blue Beetle* #43? Does this book exist? *Blue Beetle* is the best known title of the comic books listed in the accompanying charts (none of the comics in the charts is pictured in the *Gerber Photo Journal*, obviously). *Blue Beetle* #41 is dated March/April 1946 and #42 is July/August, #44 is September/October, giving good reason to speculate that #43, indeed, probably does not exist. But what if there are two July/August issues, one numbered #42 and the other #43, especially since there was no May/June issue? (By the way, Gerber does not picture Blue Beetle #21, either, but since #20 is April 1943 and #22 is June, it seems plausible to assume #21 may exist. But #43 remains an enigma.

Many newcomers to comic fandom have no idea how much work went into determining what issues do and don't exist. Bob Overstreet, building upon a huge base of data compiled by Jerry Bails and Howard Keltner in the 1960s and '70s, and Ernie Gerber have made the largest contributions to fandom in this regard, with the help of hundreds of collectors around the world. It's beyond the scope of this article to detail how all the data on "missing numbers" has been unearthed for the vast majority of titles, but it has been a monumental project lasting more than 30 years!

I can remember how a few Fawcett collectors went nuts trying to find *Captain Marvel Jr.* #34, until it was revealed that the cover to #35 (February 1946) was bound with the contents of #34 (in other words, there is no #34 cover and no #35 interior). Mistakes like this by the major publishers were fairly infrequent, but the minor publishers sometimes made them too. DC Collectors were also frantic, trying to track down *Buffalo Bill* from the middle fifties. Seems someone had reported to Overstreet about this comic based on a coverless copy of *Frontier Fighters* with "Buffalo Bill" as the opening story. I know the Carters searched in vain for this one for years!

In addition, most publishers tried to get around second-class matter mailing permit costs by continuing the same numbering system while altering (or even completely changing) the title... whether the genre of the comic book changed or not! If the genre changed, of course, it created an entirely new comic book. Many times, of course, the publishers were caught by the U.S. Post Office officials and forced to issue the "true" number of the comic. Other comics didn't last long enough to be discovered by the US Post Office. Still others were never forced to make the change. It all added up to a huge mass of confusion that we're still sorting out after all these years!

But there are always ways we "comic detectives" have uncovered the truth over

A ROMANTIC MYSTERY!

Some years ago, *Love Diary* #48 (Oct 1955) from Our Publishing Company was unexpectedly unearthed–the last (?) comic book from that company. It was published nearly a year after the company apparently had gone out of business at the end of 1954.

THE LAST ISSUE–OR IS IT?

Of the ACG title "Hooded Horseman" apparently is second series #22 (Aug/Sept 1955). The confusion over the listing of #23-27 seems to have resulted from the numbering of the first series.

the decades. Some of them involve publisher patterns. Does anyone recall from their science lessons how the planet Pluto was discovered, in part, because of variations in the orbit of Neptune? It was speculated that there must be a ninth planet out there. The patterns of some of the comic book publishers have led to similar discoveries.

For example, it seemed strange that Ace's *Love At First Sight* would end with #42 (August 1956) because most other Ace romance comics lasted slightly longer. Sure enough, our old friend Vadeboncoeur not long ago discovered #43 (November 1956). It doesn't quite rank with the discovery of Pluto, but how many people these days discover anything in our comic book solar system? Now, one can only wonder if Ace's *Love Experiences* really ended with #38 (June 1956). or is there a #39 or even a #40 still orbiting in circulation out there? We do know, however, that Ace did not publish any comic books after 1956.

Along the same lines, some years back I was truly startled to discover *Love Diary* #48 (October 1955) from Our Publications (not to be confused with the later Charlton issue of the same title). For many years it was thought that #47 (December 1954) was the last comic not only of that title, but from that publisher. As far as we know, Our Publications (also known as Orbit) did not publish any other comic books after 1954. I wonder what led to the publication of that one comic, nearly a year after the company apparently had folded? Who knows? At any rate, I was proud to make the discovery and to report it for inclusion in Overstreet

Most companies, of course, have very strictly defined parameters. We know, for example, that Quality sold out to DC at the end of 1956, and that Lev Gleason also went out of business in 1956, also EC. But enough mysteries remain to keep collectors like Stevenson, Vadeboncoeur, and yours truly searching for answers.

Here are a couple of good examples: Does *Love Tales* #59 exist? What about *Lil' Genius* #1-5?

Love Tales, a 1950s title from Atlas (Marvel), was temporarily discontinued with #58 (August 1952), although the numbering was not continued in any other title. The next known issue of *Love Tales* is #60 (February 1955). Does #59 exist? Who knows, but a lot of perplexed romance comic collectors would like to find out! We have searched in vain for this issue for many years… and rest assured, we will keep searching. (Things like this can become a minor obsession!)

The story of the apparently mythical *Lil' Genius* #1-5 is a typical example of the sort of detective work needed to solve some of these mysteries. And sometimes, as in this case, you're still left with a mystery! Anyway, the character of *Lil' Genius* is a direct transfer from the four issues of *Super Brat* published by Toby in 1954. When Toby dropped out of the comic business in 1955, Charlton inherited

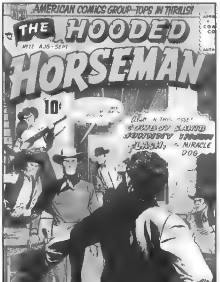
LISTED BUT NON-EXISTENT

These comics are listed in Overstreet (some with notations of "Exist?") but they almost surely don't exist. Can anyone prove that any of them do exist? If you can, please help!

All Top Comics #4, 5 (Fox)
Animal Crackers #2-9 (Fox, not to be confused with 1950s reprints)
Big Chief Wahoo #8-23 (Eastern)
Blazing West #21, 22 (ACG, these are actually the first two issues of the first series of Hooded Horseman)
Champ Comics #26-29 (Harvey)
Cosmo Cat #6-10 (Fox)
Dark Mysteries #25 (Story)
Dime Comics #1, 5 (Publisher???)
Exciting Romances #13, 14 (Fawcett)
Hawk #5-7 (St. John)
Hand of Fate #26 (Ace)
Henry #65 (Dell)
Hooded Horseman #23-27 (ACG, second series)
Iron Vic #2, 3 (St. John, not to be confused with Comics Revue #3)
Jackie Gleason #1,2 (St. John, 1948, not to be confused with 1955 St. John issues)
Jim Bowie #15 (Charlton)
Lil Genius #1-5 (Charlton)
Love Stories #6-12 (Fox, these are actually Star Publications' Top Love Stories, some with Fox reprints; the logo is confusing)
Lucky Starr #8-14 (Nationwide)
Men in Action #7-9 (Ajax)
Nightmare #4 (Ziff-Davis or St. John)
Nutty Comics #2,3 (Harvey)
Range Busters #1-7 (Fox)
Search for Love #3 (ACG)
Silver Streak #22,24 (Lev Gleason)
Super Duper Comics #5, 8, 11 (Harvey)
Sweetie Pie #3-14 (Ajax and Pines)
White Rider & Super Horse #1-3 (Star)
Witty Comics #3-7 (Chicago Nite Life News)

several of its titles, and *Super Brat* became *Lil' Genius*, who early on was referred to as "Lil' Genius, the Super Brat." The earliest issue of *Lil' Genius* we've been able to locate is #6 (July 1955), even though the *Guide* also lists #1-5 from Charlton. It seems highly unlikely that five issues have eluded us, but it is possible that a *Lil' Genius* #5 exists. I guess that it will take a "Big Genius" to solve this mystery.

Or take "Sweetie Pie" by Nadine Seltzer, one of the many "little girl" strips of the 1950's, all of which had some charm but none of which achieved the inspired (?) lunacy of Nancy or the much more inspired wiles of Little Lulu. Ajax put out two issues of this licensed newspaper strip character in 1955-56 and Pines put out a *Sweetie Pie* #15 in 1957. (Pines, which is what Standard called itself in its fading years in the late 1950s while using publisher Ned Pines' name as its logo, was infamous for putting out first issues with numbers like 5, 11, or even 50! They thought that it would seem more established and thus more worthy of newsstand space.) Could there be any other *Sweetie Pies*? It's obvious that we wouldn't be missing all of the #3-14 issues listed in the *Guide*, but...



Then there's the confusing case of the *Hooded Horseman*, among the last of the many Lone Ranger knockoffs of the 1940s and 1950s. American Comics Group (ACG) editor Richard Hughes began the original series with #21 in 1952 after changing the title of *Blazing West*, in which the red masked character was introduced in #15. The first series ran until *Hooded Horseman* #27, then was canceled. The second series began with #18 in 1955 after the Comics Code forced cancellation of the horror title *Out of the Night* with #17. The second series runs through #22, meaning there was a total of 12 issues including two #21's and two #22's. I have managed to locate all 12. But even though the *Guide* lists #23-27 in the second series, I have never been able to locate any evidence that they exist.

Speaking of ACG, a company which has become increasingly popular with collectors in recent years, it appears the mystery of the mythical June/July 1950 *Search For Love* #3 has been solved. *Search For Love* #3 is pictured in a house ad in *Lovelorn* #6, but has never been found. There's a good reason... the title was killed during the "Love Glut" of 1950. I recently discovered that the cover for *Romantic Adventures* #9 (July/August 1950) duplicates the house ad for *Search For Love* #3 in every way.

So I think we can reasonably assume that *Search For Love* ended with issue #2, after all. (But what made a prosaic title like *Romantic Adventures* succeed and an evocative title like *Search For Love* fail? Ah, unrequited love!)

But you can't safely assume too many things in the quest of comic data. Case in point: *Love Tales* from Atlas #52 is dated March 1952 and #54 is April 1952. So that means that #53 probably doesn't exist, right? Wrong! Issue #53 is dated Spring 1952! Atlas also pulled this little trick with *True Secrets* #16 (Spring 1952 sandwiched between #15 (March) and #17 (April). See why you can't make too many assumptions? I have Jim Vadeboncoeur and his marvelous Atlas collection to thank for this little lesson! (see also "The Strange Case Of The Atlas Quarterly" in the Atlas article by Carter and Calhoun in *Price Guide* #22 for more insight into this periodicity enigma.)

What about the St. John digest-size *Teen-Age Diary Secrets* #7, shown in house ads from late 1949? It has never shown up—with the same story titles listed in the house ads for #7! Can we assume #7 was never published? Maybe, maybe not.

THE EVIDENCE IS INCOMPLETE, DO THESE ISSUES EXIST? THE JURY IS STILL OUT...

Alice #2 (Ziff Davis; an Alice issue exists with #11 on cover and #2 in the indicia)
Atom-Age Combat (Fago, not to be confused with St. John's #1)
Beanie the Meanie #1,2 (Fago)
Badge of Justice #23,#1 (Charlton)
Billy the Kid Adventure Magazine #300 (Toby)
Blue Beetle #43 (Fox)
Crime & Justice #22 (Charlton)
Curley Kayo #3-6 (United)
Diary Confessions #13 (Stanmor)
Felix the Cat Summer Annual #3 (Toby)
Foreign Intrigues #13 (Charlton)
Fritzi Ritz #2 (United)
Kid Cowboy #12 (St. John)
Lil' Ghost #1 (Fago, not to be confused with St. John's #1)
Love Tales #59 (Atlas)
Love Trails #2 (Timely-Marvel)
Madhouse #4 (Ajax, second series)
Never Again #2 (Charlton)
New Romances #21 (Standard)
Peter Rabbit #1 (Fago)
Silver Kid #5 (Stanmor)
Sunday Funnies #1 (Harvey)
3 D ell #2 Rootie Kazootie (Dell)
Teen Age Diary Secrets #7 (St. John, digest size)
Tommy of the Big Top #10 (Standard)
Trapped #5 (Ace)
Western Desperado Comics #8 (Fawcett)
Wild Boy #10 (St. John, not to be confused with Ziff-Davis #10)

MYTHICAL ONE-SHOT COMICS

Dandee #1 (Four Star)
Jolly #1 (Four Star)
Korner Kid Comics #1 (Four Star)
Merry Comics #1 (Four Star, not to be confused with the Charlton issue)
Police Thrills #1 (Ajax)
Romantic Love #4 (Quality, not to be confused with the Avon title)
Top Flight Comics #1 (Four Star)
Topps Comics #1 (Four Star)
True West Romances #21 (Quality)
Varsity #1 (Parents Magazine)

RARELY SEEN OR MENTIONED

in the fan press, *Monkeyshines* #19 is experiencing new collector demand because of its previously undocumented Frazetta story. Comic books with Frank Frazetta art were once among the most sought after, with collector demand reaching its first peak in the late 1960s. Recently (early 1990s) comic books with Frazetta stories have been the focus of a resurgence of collector interest and demand... with many market analysts predicting an increase in price and a decrease in availability. Below is the splash panel from the newly discovered story ("Pete the Peke") which many in the hobby are hailing as one of the more important comic book discoveries in recent years.

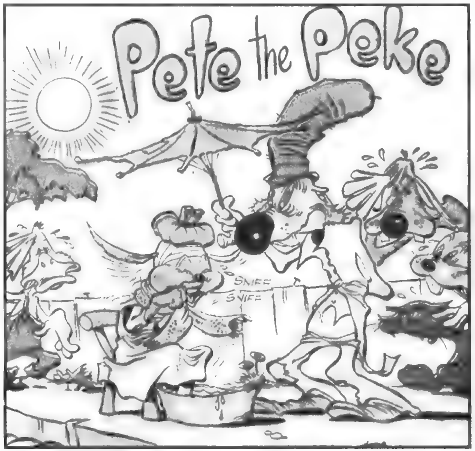
Even so, sometimes an assumption can seem relatively safe, such as the assumption that *Men In Action* #7-9 were never published by Ajax, even though they are listed in the *Guide* (Atlas did publish nine issues of a comic by that oh-so-generic title in 1952). Why can we assume this? Well, not only have the most dedicated Ajax collectors never found any copies of #7-9, but *Men In Action* #6 from Ajax is dated June 1958, and there is no known Ajax comic dated after June, 1958 (Ajax imploded, it seems).

Then there are the comics that apparently should exist but simply seem to have disappeared, if they ever did exist. Dick Lupoff's wonderfully evocative 1988 novel, "The Comic Book Killer", dealt with this subject: Could a general circulation newsstand comic book ever completely go out of existence? Well, we don't know of any that have for sure (and how would we know for certain if such a comic were published to begin with?), but I have a candidate: *Diary Confessions* #13 from Stanmor, a company about which we know precious little anyway. Issue #12 is dated November 1955 and #14 is April 1956 — both extremely scarce issues — but try as we might, no romance collector whom I know has ever confessed to seeing #13.

With regard to the late 1950s, I have not included reprints such as the IW series, the Decker-Red Top books and the Norlen/Green comics. The indefatigable Stevenson is working on it, however, so I hope to have something to report on these in the not-too-distant future. Now it's your turn to play comic detective. I'll be waiting to hear from you! ■

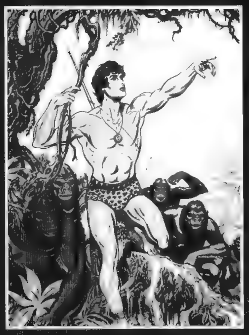
NEW FRAZETTA STORY DISCOVERED!

This seemingly unimportant issue of *Monkeyshines* #19 (March 1948) from Ace Publications has a five-page Frazetta funny animal story. California collector and researcher, Jim Vadeboncoeur, recently made the historic Frazetta discovery. © ACE



Michelle Nolan is a nationally recognized collector and researcher of comic books from the '40s through the '60s. She has one of the most extensive collections of 1950's comic books in the United States. In real life Michelle works as a freelance journalist.

REMEMBERING



Burne Hogarth
1911 - 1996

Bernard Baily
1920 - 1996

Jerry Siegel
1914 - 1996

While the eyes of the world focused on Europe and the savage war looming on the horizon, a massive explosion rocked the face of 1940's America. This wasn't, however, a blast of gunpowder, flaming steel and sulfurous smoke on a distant European hillside. It was an eruption of superpowered beings bursting forth from the gleaming four-color pages of American comic books.

Hot on the heels of the ground-breaking introduction of Superman and Batman, 1940 saw the release of a vast new army of superheroes. Each new hero trying desperately to out-fly, out-power, out-fight or out-flame the other; seeking to stake out a small amount of territory in the burgeoning comic book market. Many of these new characters were destined to wallow in the mire of poor sales, hurried artwork and unsophisticated writing. Some, however, stood apart as jewels of an exciting era, when creative energy flowed like an eternal fountain of youth and filled the pages with the tales of men who had muscles of iron and nerves of steel

Out of a world of lust for power, many men have risen to great heights. Some have achieved greatness by force, others by birth. Out of this came the Cat Man.

–Crash Comics #4

For the first time in the short history of the medium, new character titles were outselling the standard comic strip reprints. No single year before, or since, had seen the creation of so many significant comic books. DC comics introduced such perennial heroes as the Flash, Hawkman, the Spectre, Dr. Fate, Hourman, and the Green Lantern. Timely Comics countered with the release of *Daring Mystery Comics*, *Red Raven Comics*, and the *Human Torch*. Over at Fawcett, *Whiz Comics* featuring Captain Marvel and the Spy Smasher, paved the way for the hero-filled *Master Comics* and *Wow Comics*

WITH EYES BLAZING like searchlights, Catman races up the sheer wall of a skyscraper in his first cover appearance on *Crash Comics* #5 (Nov 1940).

This is the year that Will Eisner began his seminal work on *The Spirit*. Lou Fine released the Black Condor in *Crack Comics* and the Ray in *Smash Comics*. MLJ had the Shield, the Comet, Steel Sterling and the Black Hood. Ace launched *Sure-fire Comics* with Flash Lightning and *Super Mystery Comics* with Magno the Magnetic Man. Easter Color published *Heroic Comics* with Bill Everett's Hydroman. At Better/Standard, *Exciting Comics* and *Startling Comics* hit the stands, soon to feature the exploits of The Black Terror and The Fighting Yank. *Prize Comics* starred the Black Owl. *Target Comics* featured the White Streak.

And Tem Publishing had the Catman

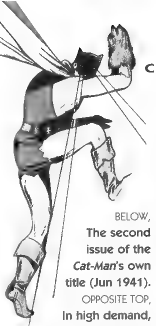
The Catman was the brain-child of Frank Temerson, a former city attorney from Birmingham and the head of Tem Publishing. Earlier, Temerson had established himself in the comic book market by purchasing both the Comics Magazine Company and the Harry "A" Chesler comic-book lineup in 1937. He then sold both businesses to Centaur Publishing in 1938, turning a handsome profit. Encouraged by the financial prospects in comic publishing, Temerson returned to the business in May of 1940 with *Crash Comics* and introduced his line of heroes which included Strongman and the Blue Streak.

The majority of the work for *Crash Comics* was contracted through the small comic book studio headed by Bert Whitman. While the heroes featured in these early issues were rather unimaginative and uninspired, the talent that worked on these heroes can not be questioned. One of the more underrated artists of the Golden Age, Irwin Hasen (who later drew such titles as the Fox for MLJ, the Wildcat for DC, and ghosted much of the early artwork for Mart Nodell on the Green Lantern) was a fixture of the studio, as was a little known artist by the name of Jack Kirby.

Kirby's work in *Crash Comics*, both with and without Joe Simon, represented some of the earliest comic book output of his extraordinary career, predated only by his work on *Jumbo Comics* in 1938 and *Famous Funnies* in 1939. For each issue of *Crash Comics*, Kirby contributed a five page story which chronicled the exploits of Adam Starr, the leader of Solar Legion, a peacekeeping unit that patrolled the war ravaged planet of Saturn. This early work showcased many of the traits that would later go on to become staple components of classic S&K storytelling; exciting, well-written plots, dynamic action panels, creative page layouts and those marvelous Kirby spacecraft and machinations.

Despite this vast wealth of talent working at the studio, the fate of *Crash Comics* remained in tenuous balance until September 1940, when issue #4 hit the stands featuring the first appearance and origin of the Cat Man. From that point on, things would never be the same for the small publisher. In retrospect, it seems apparent that Temerson didn't expect much from the new hero. Cat Man, in fact, received

By Todd Severin

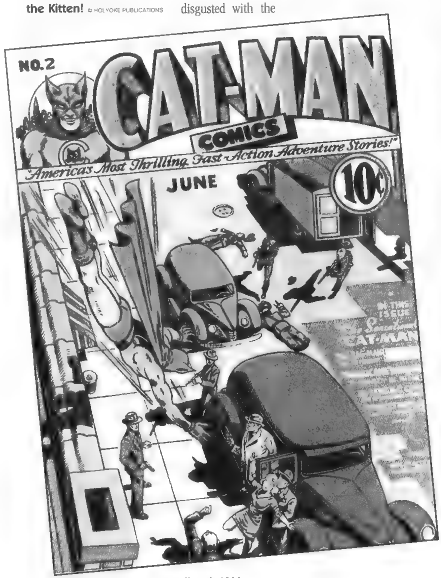


BELOW, **The second issue of the *Cat-Man*'s own title (Jun 1941).** OPPOSITE TOP, **In high demand, *Cat-Man* #1 (May 1941) sports Catman's second cover appearance.** OPPOSITE BOTTOM, **A scarce copy of *Catman* #5 (Dec 1941) introducing the Kitten!** © HOLYOKE PUBLICATIONS

absolutely no mention on the cover and the story was lost between the pages of rather forgettable Buck Burke and Secret Agent Z-2 stories. The introduction of the Cat Man, however, proved to be Temerson's greatest success.

The origin story, drawn by Hasen, detailed how David Merrywether, the son of a research scientist, became orphaned when his family was murdered at the hands of "jungle wild men" while collecting specimens in the deepest jungles of India (later issues would inexplicably change the setting of the massacre to Burma). David, merely an infant, was spared from the slaughter, later to be discovered by a tigress who raised him as one of her own cubs. Through association with the beasts, David developed extraordinary abilities, including super strength, agility, keen eyesight and most importantly, the nine lives granted to each member of the cat family.

Upon his return to the world of men, David became disgusted with the evils of the world which he felt would "scar his righteousness", so he decided to devote his life to combating evil. He donned a green leopard skin costume with black mask and yellow cape and was reborn into the world as the sensational Cat Man. His first adventure in *Crash Comics* #4 pitted the Cat Man against Bull Jackson, a vicious mobster who kidnapped a radio program producer and attempted to coerce her into broadcasting "hit" information across the airwaves. Cat Man foiled his scheme and in the process revealed one of his most unique attributes. Stabbed in the heart by Bull, Cat Man actually died on page five of his inaugural story, but was brought back to life by the spirit of his guardian tigress who granted Cat Man another of his mystical nine lives.



Despite some glaring editorial errors (Cat Man's eyes could glow in the darkness and project light beams like search lights) and the "Tarzan of the Tigers" origin (which similarly was being mimicked by the Black Condor who was orphaned and raised by a flock of condors, thereby learning how to fly), the Cat Man proved to be a major success. So much so, that he was granted the cover of *Crash Comics* #5. Drawn by Whitman, this cover featured the Cat Man scaling up the side of a building, his eyes blazing like searchlights as he battled a gun-toting gangster. The cover proudly proclaimed "The Sensational Cat Man, the only human with nine lives".

In May of 1941, Temerson changed the name of his company to Holyoke Publishing and discontinued *Crash Comics*. In its place he unveiled the flagship title for his new company, *Cat-Man Comics* (the hyphen was added at this point, later to be replaced by the one word title, *Catman*).

With this first issue, Charles Quinlan took over the art reins, while Martin Panzer contributed the script. From that point on, the Cat-Man never looked back. Quinlan immediately took hold of the character and made him his own. From the first issue where we see the newly (thankfully) costumed Cat-Man launching himself at two thugs, the new artistic team redefined the Cat-Man entirely, adding depth and breadth to his stories and backing these stories up with quality artwork.

Although not remembered as a major force in the Golden Age of Comics, Quinlan was an able artist. His work employed touches of Kirby with some of the delicate line work of Lou Fine and facial characterization of H.G. Peter. He experimented often with perspective and expanded the boundaries of

the comic book panel. Under his care, the Cat-Man became more powerful, more skilled and more agile.

This first issue found the Cat-Man, now dressed in red tights, mask and cape with blue trunks, battling against the infamous bridge destroyers. In this story, a fiendish group of terrorists erected a secret tower from which they could destroy bridges with their destructive ray guns. Although the rays were invisible, the keen cat-eyes of David Merrywether were able to detect their presence and led the Cat-Man to the scene of the crime. There, he handily defeated the terrorists, not however, before he was killed by a well-placed blast of the destructo-ray. Reports of his death were, of course, greatly exaggerated, as the spirit of his guardian tigress appeared on the scene, placed her paw upon his lifeless body and bestowed to him yet another of his nine lives.

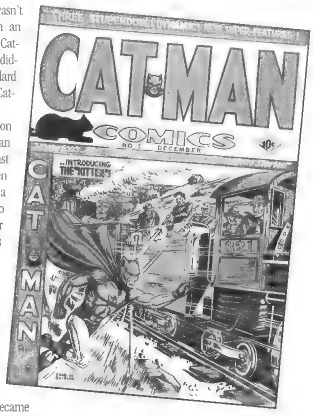
At this point, the editors must have realized that they had put themselves into quite a quandary. Although the comic book was an undeniable success, with the Cat-Man continuing to be killed in each of his first few adventures it meant that the series would never be able to extend beyond the ninth issue. Sooner or later, the tigress would have to look at her unfortunate ward and say "that's all nine, baby," and with that, the Cat-Man would remain dead. So, the unusual tale of the Cat-Man's nine lives was abandoned, as was, unfortunately, the interesting story of David Merrywether's mystical tiger guardian. From that point on, Cat-Man became more of a straightforward, tight-wearing, steel-muscled superhero.

By June of 1941, with war ravaging across Europe, the American superhero became a force fighting for the preservation of Democracy. Ushered in by patriotic heroes, such as Captain America, the Shield, and the Fighting Yank, comic book heroes were no longer content to battle the evils of the underworld on the home soil. Instead their attention turned towards combating the true evil that lurked across the ocean in the guise of Hitler and the Japanese Empire. Soon almost every superhero did his or her part to support the war effort, and the Cat-Man was no exception. Issue #2 opened with a beautiful splash of the Cat-Man launching himself into a trench full of surprised Nazi soldiers. While the story didn't actually mention the war, it did tell the tale of an Axis plot to drag America into a war with the European nation of Rodalia by kidnapping the Rodalian ambassador.

With issue #3, the war effort became a full-time occupation for the Cat-Man as David Merrywether abandoned his career as a private investigator and enlisted as a lieutenant (later a captain) in the army. Following issues featured some beautiful war-time covers, including two Hitler, Tojo, Mussolini covers by Quinlan and a classic anti-Japanese piece by Schomburg. With all the attention that has been focused on the wonderful wartime propaganda covers of the forties, these *Cat-Man Comics* covers may be some of the most overlooked. The cover of issue #20 even went so far as to depict the Cat-Man throttling the neck of Adolf himself.

As the popularity of teenage sidekicks such as Robin, Bucky, Toro and Domino the Miracle Boy escalated, every hero, it seemed, needed a young aide to assist him in the battle against evil. Once again, the Cat-Man wasn't one to be left behind. In an unusual twist, however, Cat-Man's battling companion didn't turn out to be the standard Cat-boy, rather it was a Cat-girl. A Kitten to be precise.

In *Cat-Man* #5, Temerson introduced Katie Conn, an eleven year old gymnast who was orphaned when her parents were killed in a train wreck. With no options but to live with her evil uncle Jake, Katie was forced to play the pawn in his schemes of robbery and murder. When her uncle carjacked David Merrywether, Katie bravely came to David's rescue, helping him defeat her uncle and then later a group of Nazi spies. From that point on, she became



MARKETPLACE

VALUE SURVEY

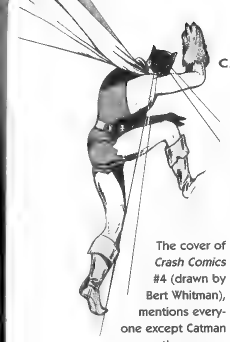
(Value ranges for Good and Fine condition, data based on both dealer and collector input.) © 1996 CBM, ARP

Crash Comics

#1	$250-350	$1150-1550
#2, 3	$150-200	$400-500
#4	$200-250	$850-900
#5	$250-300	$900-1000

Catman Comics

#1	$300-400	$1200-1500
#2	$200-250	$850-900
#3	$160-175	$500-600
#4	$140-160	$400-500
#5-12	$125-140	$350-400
#13	$125-140	$400-500
#14,15	$100-125	$350-400
#16	$200-250	$450-500
#17,18	$100-125	$350-400
#19,20	$200-250	$450-500
#21-26	$100-125	$350-400
#27-32	$200-250	$450-500



The cover of *Crash Comics* #4 (drawn by Bert Whitman), mentions everyone except Catman on the cover... yet it is Catman's first appearance that confers much of this issues collector value.

David Merrywether's ward by day and the costumed crime-fighter, the Kitten, by night.

That no one ever questioned the morals of a US Army Captain living with an eleven year old girl remains a mystery to this day, especially when one considers how much flack Bruce Wayne received for living with Dick Grayson. But no one seemed to notice this unusual living arrangement, even as Katie began to grow up right before the readers eyes. Depicted as an innocent eleven year old in her first appearance, Katie's rush through puberty must be one of best chronicled hormonal bursts in the pages of the Golden Age of comic books. By issue #18, there was no denying that she had sprouted breasts and by the end of the series, Katie had been transformed into a fully developed, coquettish woman often found cradled in the arms of her guardian, "uncle" David. That Frederic Wertham never picked up on this for mention in *Seduction of the Innocent* is a miracle.

The remainder of Cat-Man's adventures left him battling one evil menace after another. Although never blessed with a villain of the caliber of the Joker or the Red Skull, the Cat-Man did have his arch nemesis, Dr. Macabre. First appearing in glorious detail on the cover of issue #28, Dr. Macabre battled the Cat-Man throughout the remainder of the series. At his most menacing, Dr. Macabre was a villainous master genius bent on world domination. The artwork by this time was in the hands of Bob Fujitani who previously distinguished himself with his excellent work on the Hangman series in *Pep Comics* and *Hangman Comics*. He depicted Dr. Macabre as a monocled, goateed madman, dressed in a top hat and tails.

Cat-Man #29 found Dr. Macabre acquiring the touch of death as inadvertent exposure to the Z ray gun made his touch deadly to all who came within reach. Cat-Man and Kitten narrowly defeated him in this adventure by entrapping his hands in rubber gloves to neutralize his power. Tales like this kept the Cat-Man occupied until his series finally ended in August of 1946 with issue #32.

Being an anthology comic, The Cat-Man was only one of many heroes that occupied the pages of *Cat-Man Comics*. Many heroes, such as the Hood, the Reckoner, the Ragman, the Black Widow and Blaze Baylor, came and went at the dictates of their popularity. Only one other character managed to last throughout the entire series. This was the Deacon, a crime-fighter in the guise of a preacher at Marshland church who battled crime with the assistance of his young aide, Mickey Matthews.

His stories were brisk action yarns that demanded a terrific stretch of the reader's imagination. One adventure found The Deacon, a man with no superpowers, singlehandedly defeating a mob of over 500 of the country's toughest gangsters who were armed with tanks and a fighter aircraft. Clearly, the Deacon had God on his side.

In 1942, Mickey and Kitten joined forces as the Little Leaders and embarked on their own adventures sans the guidance of their heroic guardians. Their stories, drawn by Quinlan and later Jack Alderman, were actually more of a citizenship lecture than a superpowered adventure, informing children how to behave in order to "win the war on the homefront." Nevertheless, the Little Leaders proved to be quite popular and their adventures appeared in issues #8 through #29 and again in issues #31 and #32.

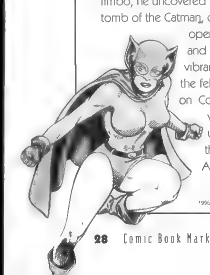
Undeniably, the most important backup feature to Cat-Man was a little known character who appeared in issues #8-12 by the name of Volton. This feature marked the very first published comic book artwork by Joe Kubert, then a fifteen year-old prodigy. This

MUSTY TOMB OF

THE CATMAN OF TODAY

Recently, the mystical guardian Tigress returned to our plane of existence and granted another magical feline life to the Catman. This time she appeared courtesy Bill Black, the publisher of AC Comics. In 1989, Black embarked on a sentimental journey to revive many of the lost Golden Age heroes. While toiling through the archives and catacombs of hero limbo, he uncovered the musty tomb of the Catman, cracked open the vault, and released the vibrant spirit of the feline champion. Combined with his resurrections of the Golden Age Daredevil (known as Red Devil in the AC universe), Crimebuster, and Mac Raboy's Green Lama, the Catman and Kitten exploded into the AC universe in Femforce #19 and began appearing in many AC titles.

In addition, Black established Golden Age Greats, a quarterly publication dedicated to reprinting classic adventures of the heroes from the forties. Volume one, released in the Winter of 1994, presented the Catman and Kitten, fighting side by side with Miss Victory, The Hood, Rocketman, Jet Girl, and the Green Lama. This title lovingly restored the original adventure of Cat-Man Comics #29, introducing the villainous Dr. Macabre to a new generation of comic book readers.



™& © AC COMICS

work displayed what would become classic Kubert art; lush inking style, impressive staging and dynamic action. Kubert left Cat-Man to do back-up features for *Police Comics*, *Speed Comics* and *Smash Comics* before being assigned his first major character in 1944, the Hawkman. The rest, as they say, is history.

By the time *Catman Comics* #26 was released, Holyhoke had again changed names to become Continental Publishing, and with the name change came the arrival of the incredible L.B. Cole. Cole's covers for the final seven issues of *Catman Comics* remain some of his most impressive work, with the classic Dr. Macabre/skull cover for #28 arguably the pinnacle of his extraordinary career. His covers transformed the Catman from a common hero into a mystical, almost supernatural being. His body became leaner, more agile, more imposing.

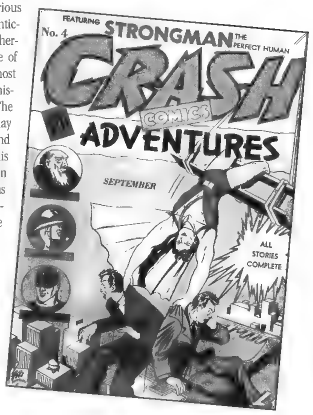
Cole launched Catman and Kitten into one harrowing situation after another. The cover to issue #29 found the Catman, aided by a pack of tigers and lions, preventing the evil Dr. Macabre from slitting the throat of a prone Kitten. The cover of issue #31 (see the cover of this magazine) turned the tables, as Catman found himself surrounded by a pack of vicious, drooling wolves, while cradling an unconscious Kitten in his arms, this time with Dr. Macabre in control. The coloring, composition and lines of these covers were all vintage L.B. Cole.

Cole went on to distinguish himself with his seminal work on other Continental titles, *Terrific. Contact. Power Comics* and the ground-breaking horror and mystery book, *Suspense Comics*.

But by this time, the days of Continental Comics were numbered. Despite its success with *Catman* and *Suspense*, Continental never successfully managed to have more than four titles in publication at any one time. Many of the titles, including *Catman Comics* suffered from erratic artwork and occasionally uninspired storytelling, making them tough to compete with Timely or DC. The financial pressures finally proved too much for Temerson, and *Catman Comics* was canceled in August of 1946.

As the war in Europe came to an end, and with it the Golden Age of Comics, many superheroes found themselves unable to adjust to civilian life. The thrill of the super man had faded, and soldiers returning from the real-life horrors of the battlefields wanted tales of science fiction, horror, crime, and western adventure loaded with a substantial amount of cheesecake... not grown men with bursting muscles prancing around in tights! The heroes who fought so valiantly against the Nazi aggressors in Europe or the vicious thugs and spies on the homefront, like the Catman, faded away into oblivion.

In retrospect, The Catman had a proud and glorious career. His tales remain enticing even today. His pages heralded the arrival of some of the most talented and most important artists in the history of comic books. The mention of his name may not evoke the same awe and fascination of some of his contemporaries, but seen in this light, The Catman was truly one of the many jewels to emerge from the year 1940. ■



Todd is an internationally know Optimologist specializing in glaucoma. He has authored 40 journals and one book chapter on the subject. He is also a Professor at the Univ. of California Berkley.

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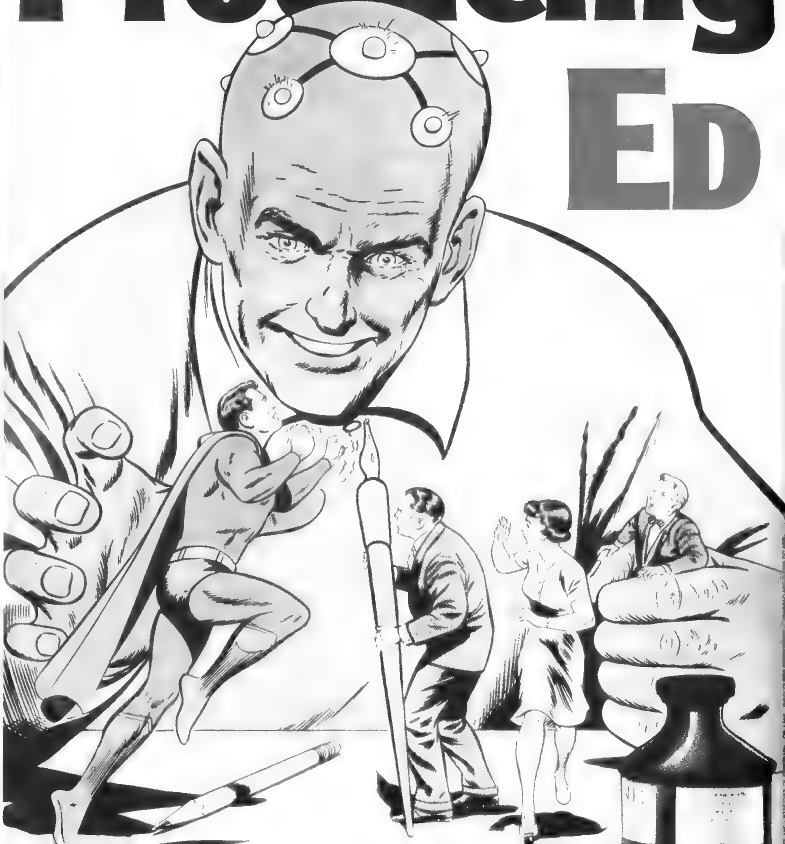
Producing Ed



Superman

AN INTERVIEW WITH DC'S MAN BEHIND THE SCENES...

EISENBERG

BY PAT S. CALHOUN

Ed Eisenberg spent 22 years as production manager for DC, and for years before that was involved with the DC output in the early days when the color work was done by a separate company. He is the man who actually chose the color scheme for Superman's costume on the cover of the book that started the Golden Age... *Action* #1, June 1938! He is also one of the key members of the DC team who helped make the industry giant so successful during some of their greatest years. *CBM* takes you into the "inner sanctum" of the Golden Age comics business, where dreams are turned into four-color realities.

I also want to publicly acknowledge Ed's wife, Rose, who helped with many of the questions and the memories... thanks Rose! Thanks also to their daughter, Sharon Kovesdy, who generously provided the photos. Sharon has many happy memories of growing up among the people in the comic book business... and she gets the most amazing birthday cards!

Pat Calhoun: *Where in the comics industry did you first work?*

Ed Eisenberg: Actually, at first I worked for a company that did the color work for National (DC). I originated the color scheme for Superman which appeared on *Action Comics* #1 in 1938. We had started with a red car but changed it to green so as not to get in the way of the red in Superman's costume. I chose the costume colors that looked best. I worked for the Strauss shop doing coloring, color separation, and Ben-Day work. I left in 1942 for induction into the Army. During the war I helped make maps of the invasion of Japan.

Ed Eisenberg at the drawing board in the DC offices at the close of the Golden Age.

Pat: *How did you first come to work for DC?*

Eisenberg: When I got out of the Army in 1945, I got a telegram from Sol Harrison of National Periodicals

The colors used on the cover of *Action Comics* #1 were actually selected by Ed Eisenberg.

Ed's 24th Wedding Anniversary card to Rose gets the "DC" treatment. This card hails from 1965, towards the end of Ed's comic book career.

offering me a job. I took the job as assistant production manager to Ray Perry.

Shortly after that, Perry, whose health was fragile, had to step down. Whit Ellsworth, editor-in-chief, called me into his office and offered me the job of production manager, which I accepted. DC had one group of books that Sol Harrison produced, and I did the second group. My titles included *Adventure, Action, Superman, Superboy, Wonder Woman*, and *Green Lantern*.

Later I worked on titles like *All American Western* and *Our Army At War*. I also tried to promote the romance titles, like *Falling In Love*. In the early 1960s I think there were around 48 different titles.

Pat: *When did you leave DC?*

Eisenberg: In 1967 I left the company to pursue other interests.

Pat: *How did you acquire the original cover to* Action Comics *#1?*

Eisenberg: After Harry Donenfeld (one of the owners) had a stroke in the mid-1960s, I just happened to walk by when they were cleaning out his desk. I saw the original cover for *Action* #1 in the trash can and asked if I could have it for a memento. They said, sure, so I took it.

Pat: *What an amazing keepsake! So... in the late-1930s you didn't work directly for DC?*

Eisenberg: Right, it was after the War when I went on the DC payroll. By then they were doing more of the production and color work in house. The production work included all the paste-up, and redrawing lines that copied poorly, and then coloring and color separating.

Pat: *Did the Comics Code affect you?*

Eisenberg: The Comics Code Authority came along and had to approve all our stories — making sure skirts weren't too short and cutting down on cleavage.

Pat: *DC's "conservative" approach*

EXIT
I'M ALWAYS TEACHING HIM FOR 24 YEARS AND HE STILL DON'T KNOW HOW TO DO IT!
LISTEN ED! GO TO THE BLACKBOARD AND WRITE--
HAPPY ANNIVERSARY-- 24 TIMES!
HOW DO YOU WRITE THAT IN THE SET THEORY?
TWENTY FOUR YEARS AND HE HASN'T GRADUATED YET!
MAYBE HE'S IN LOVE WITH HER
MAYBE HE'S JOINING THE ANTIQUE COLLECTION!
DEC 21st 1965
SHE SAID DON'T!
SHE TEACHES MATH NOT ENGLISH - YOU FINK!
NO MAYBES ABOUT IT. WITH ALL MY LOVE! -ED

needed a lot less tailoring than most of the other companies… many of which just went out of business around then.

Eisenberg: I'd tell the artists not to put it in the first place. The women looked sexy enough without too much cleavage.

Pat: *In the mid-1950s DC started doing these wash covers, where diluted ink would produce grey tones that gave them a paint ed look.*

Eisenberg: We were very careful about the look of our books and took great pains to get good production values

Pat: *I read in an interview with Sol Harrison a story about you drawing a sound effect on a page that was at a production stage where the image was reversed and your explosion sound came out MOOB instead of BOOM*

Eisenberg: Oh yeah They bugged me with MOOB for years

Pat: *Did you work directly with the various artists, or would you get their work after the drawing was done?*

Eisenberg: Both ways. DC had great editors, so the work was usually right on. Once in a while I'd ask someone to re-draw something

Pat: *So you knew everyone Let's name some names ..*

Eisenberg: Carmine Infantino comes to mind. A good man and a thorough professional. He went on to become Art Director. I introduced him to comics, along with Mort Drucker

Pat: *Mort now does covers for* Time Magazine *instead of* Mad Magazine

Eisenberg: Another good soul and artist is Murphy Anderson.

Pat: *An excellent science fiction artist Did you ever work with Siegel or Shuster?*

Eisenberg: Some. And I saw Jerry Siegel a few years ago. He's a very mild-mannered man. And Joe Kubert was one of the big guns for our war books.

Pat: *Kubert is great. Now his son is a pretty good artist as well. How about Sheldon Mayer?*

Eisenberg: Sheldon was a fine man. He had that wonderful strip about the two kids Sugar and Spike is a classic. In the editorial department, I also want to mention Mort Weisinger, Jack Schiff, and Julius Schwartz

Pat: *There are three men who helped make DC great. Schwartz is considered the "godfather" of the whole superhero revival in the late 1950s. That era peaked with the Justice League of America, a revamping of the Justice Society, and they were both written by Gardner Fox!*

Eisenberg: I haven't thought about Gardner for a while. He was one of our most important writers. It's coming back to me now- there was Murray Boltinoff as well. another editor

I remember Ray Burnley, an editor, and his artist brother, Jack. I felt Jack drew Batman better than anyone! And in the production department, we also had Jack Adler and Jerry Serpe and Tom Nicolosi working there.

Pat: *Any thoughts on the comic book business in general?*

Eisenberg: Well, I remember we used to take groups of school kids on tours of the produc-

This get-well card was done by the DC gang while Ed was in the hospital recovering from a back injury. The signatures include many well-known celebrities from the DC universe, including: Carmine (Infantino), Julie (Schwartz), Murphy (Anderson), Sol (Harrison), Mort Weisinger, Jack Schiff, George Kashdan, etc.

Rare photo (circa 1960) featuring from L to R: Jerry Serpe (color separator), Sol Harrison (production manager), Tom Nicholosi color separator), and Ed Eisenberg (prod. manager).

tion department to see how comics were made. That was fun.

Pat: *Did you receive much mail?*

Eisenberg: We got a lot of letters from college students and adults… as well as kids. We used to give away original art to letter writers. If we knew then what we know now about the value of original art... well, a lot was given away in those days.

Pat: *Did either of the company owners, Donenfeld and Liebowitz, participate in the selection and development of content?*

Eisenberg: No. Donenfeld was an "outside" man. He never remembered any of our names- a real 'hail fellow well met' type.

Pat: *Were there any memorable parties at DC back then?*

Eisenberg: I remember when Leibowitz' daughter got married. What an event! There were three bands, tons of champagne...

Pat: *Did you continue your art after you left DC?*

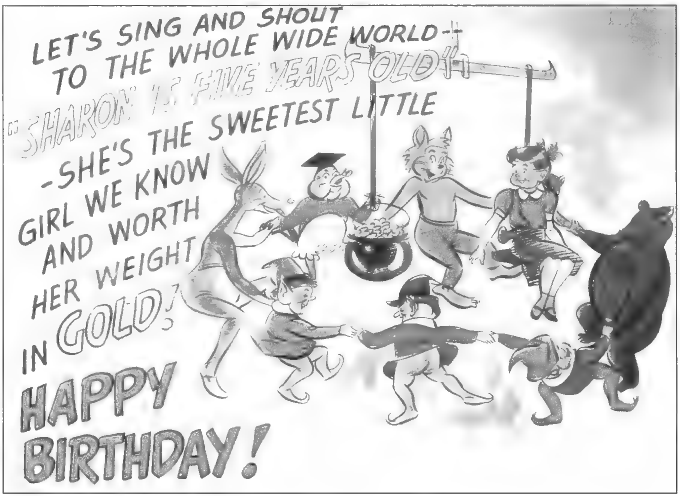
Eisenberg: I did some painting in oils after I left DC. Even today my wife and I travel, and I'll take pictures and paint scenes from the pictures

Pat: *You all put out a lot of entertaining comics. Thanks for letting us go 'behind the scenes' to parts of the business that don't get talked about as often as others. Thanks much for sharing with us… I know our readers are always eager for insights into the origin of "the world's greatest adventure-strip character" and DC.*

Eisenberg: Thank you, Pat. It was fun talking with you. ■

Ed Eisenberg, December, 1994.

The birthday card daughter Sharon received from her parents on her fifth birthday. Ed provided the concepts and the sentiments… obliging DC staffers helped with the cartooning.



CRASH COMICS

The late 1930s and early 1940s were full of companies attempting to carve a niche in the fast-growing comic industry. Some titles (and publishers for that matter) vanished before readers even knew they existed. It is time to dig deep into the old comic box to review *Crash Comics*, a title that ran from May 1940 to November 1940. *Crash*, although only lasting five issues, was, in historical retrospect, a wonderful title. It was produced by "Tem Publishing". In the fifth issue of *Crash*, it has an ad for *Whirlwind Comics* (and *Speed Comics* also) which was produced by "Nita Publications". Both titles appear to have been produced by Bert Whitman. In the early 1940s Whitman produced a number of features through Whitman Associates, one of the many art shops that sprang up to meet the insatiable demand for original material from the ever-increasing number of comic publishers. Most of the covers for these apparent sister titles were drawn by Bert Whitman.

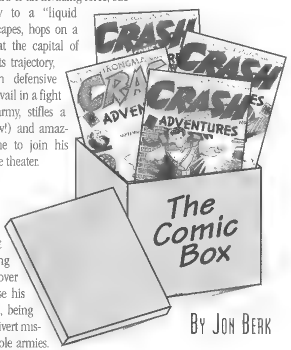
Bert Whitman had an early and distinguished Golden Age career. He was there at the very beginning of comics. His first work, "Judge Perkins", appeared in *New Fun* #1 and #2. His credits include "Cyclone" in *Whirlwind Comics*, "Dr. Mortal" in *Weird Comics*, "Green Hornet" covers and art and several features for Fawcett including "Masterman".

For *Crash Comics* he contributed "Strongman", the title's Superman knock-off. "Strongman" was described as having "the strength of a hundred elephants, the speed of a racing car and the skin with the toughness of a rhinoceros...the perfect specimen of a human being...a super-human of brain and brawn...the mighty man of tomorrow among the ordinary people of today." These traits were developed by following for many years a secret book of yoga. He dedicates himself to fight on the side of "American ideals"; he is a crusader for "good against evil, he dares any feat, regardless of danger.

Strongman was Percy Van Norton, yet another in a long line of playboys in comics who turned to superheroics for diversion. Most of his adventures pitted him against invading dictatorial forces massing against small defenseless nations. He usually learned of these heinous events while cruising on his yacht with his other rich companions. The fictional evil invading protagonists in the strip were only thinly masked from the real life tyrannical despots threatening Europe at that time. For instance, in the third issue Strongman repels the invasion of Dictator "Nilats" of "Aissur". The final confrontation takes place in "Wocsorn".

EPIC CONFRONTATIONS

An amusing aspect of the Strongman tales is that epic confrontations against these evil powers would develop and be resolved within an impossibly short time span while his companions went to the movies or were serving a meal to refugees on his boat. For instance, in issue #5 he is about to enter a theater with his friends in Polaria, when he observes (with his "super sight") a parachutist landing in the distance. He excuses himself, takes a cab to the landing site, captures the parachutist (and the many other parachutists) which are the vanguard of an invading force, succumbs momentarily to a "liquid cement" cannon, escapes, hops on a missile being fired at the capital of Polaria and diverts its trajectory, rallies the Polarian defensive forces, helps them prevail in a fight with the invading army, stifles a counter-attack, (whew!) and amazingly returns in time to join his friends as they exit the theater.



STRONGMAN'S YOGA SECRET

Strongman's secret yoga exercises must have been something special (move over Charles Atlas) because his strength is incredible, being able to attack ships, divert missiles, and take on whole armies. He is able to leap tall buildings in a single bound- derivative of another do-gooder over at *Action Comics*. Brightly clad in a blue and yellow outfit, Strongman did not make it beyond the fifth issue. In fact, he was displaced as the cover feature by "Cat Man" who had appeared for the first time in the preceding issue.

By Jon Berk

Some other strips rounding out this short-lived title were: "Blue Streak"- defender of the people (a costumed hero who would take on evil dictators around the world who victimized local populaces), "Buck Burke" (a humorous jungle series about a young zoologist out to bring back zoo specimens who is aided inadvertently by his jungle guide "Jo-Jo"), Secret Agent Z-2 (run-of-the mill espionage adventures), "Jane Drake Detective", "The Flying Trio" (a bunch of happy-go-lucky aviators involved in various adventures in pre-war Asia), and "Shangra" (a continuing drama set in a mysterious country ruled by a mystical person who is 200 years old, the seventh son of a seventh son who tries to exert control over two western reporters stranded in his land).

including great leaping ability, dexterity, and the ability to see in the dark with eyes that glow and light up in the dark. The evils of the world scar his sense of righteousness so that he decides to devote his life to the fight against them.

The Cat Man is outfitted in a green uniform with a cap, cat cowl, and oversized cat claw gloves. As he evolved in *Cat-Man Comics*, he went through a series of costume changes.

In each of his two adventures he is beaten and killed by his adversary. However, in each story the spirit of his old guardian tigress comes to revive him using up one of his nine cat lives. These two adventures were drawn by Irwin Hasen, who drew a number of Golden Age features, ranging from "The Ferret" for Timely, to a number of characters in

Strongman was the title's Superman knock-off. He was described as having "the strength of a hundred elephants, the speed of a racing car, and the skin with the toughness of a rhinoceros... the perfect specimen of a human being... a super-human of brain and brawn... the mighty man of tomorrow among the ordinary people of today".

CRASH TRIVIA

The publishers address listed in the indicias of both Tem's *Crash Comics* and Nita's *Whirlwind Comics* is identical, suggesting that the two Publishers were one in the same.

THE COMING OF CAT-MAN

The feature that gives this title some historical notoriety, and was the only feature to survive the demise of this title and go on to enjoy another of his nine lives, was "Cat Man". His origin in *Crash* #4 (September 1940) is derivative of the origin of Lou Fine's "Black Condor" who had debuted in *Crack Comics* #1 (May 1940). (The Black Condor was an infant who accompanied his parents on an archeological expedition in Mongolia. All save himself are massacred by roaming bandits. Coming upon the scene of carnage a female condor takes the infant and raises him as her own. He learns the attributes of a condor, including flying.)

"Cat Man" is an infant, David Merrywether, who is traveling with his parents in deepest India. They are on an expedition, searching for botanical specimens, when the family is killed by a band of spear-toting "jungle wild men". A hungry tigress comes upon the scene and instead of slaughtering the surviving infant, her mothering instincts sense the great tragedy, and she takes the child as her own cub. As with the "Black Condor", close family life allows Merrywether to take on many of the attributes of a cat,

DC's *All American Comics*.

Crash is also notable for "Solar Legion", which was one of the first comicbook science fiction series drawn by a young Jack Kirby. (See "Cosmic Carson" in *Science Comics* for his other early sci-fi strip.) The hero of the series is Adam Starr whose goal is to "bring justice to a solar system ruled by the lawless". While the plots were fairly thin, this series premiered some cosmic art and fantastic creatures that Kirby was to refine nearly twenty years later at Marvel Comics.

Crash Comics, like many of the titles of the early 1940s, did not last for long. However, it is one of those special short-lived titles that would be a proud addition to any Golden Age collection. ■

Jon Berk is an attorney from Hartford, Connecticut and has been collecting comic books for over twenty years. His nationally renowned collection includes complete Silver Age Marvel runs, extensive Silver Age DC material, and one of the most complete pre-hero Golden Age collections in existence.

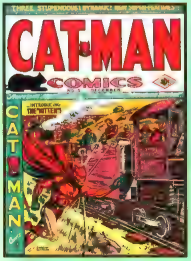
COLOR GALLERY

Crash Comics #3 (Jul 1940, LEFT) This underwater "torpedo diverting" cover by Bert Whitman ranks as one of Strongman's finest moments. Jack Kirby's Solar Legion continues inside.

Crash Comics #1 (May 1940, RIGHT) Strongman, like most of the Superman imitators, didn't need a lawsuit to keep his career brief. Conceptual weakness did the job on its own.

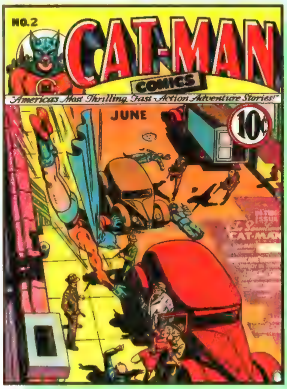
TEM PUBLISHING CO

Crash Comics #2 (Jun 1940, above) Strongman pulls a super-stunt on a simple and colorful cover. Shangra, Buck Burke, and the Blue Streak receive cover billing as back-up features. *Crash Comics* #5 (Nov 1940, left) This Bert Whitman Cat-Man cover closes out the run with a bang. For the characters in cameos on the left- these are all last appearances.



FASTER THAN A SPEEDING LOCOLMOTIVE Catman dodges a hail of bullets on the cover of *Catman* #5 (Dec 1941, ABOVE), the issue that introduced the Kitten!

LEAPING FROM A TALL BUILDING, Catman surprises the mob and their blonde hostage on the cover of *Catman* #2 (Jun 1941, BELOW).



ALTHOUGH ABSENT FROM THE COVER, Catman made his debut in *Crash Comics* #4 (Sep 1940, ABOVE).

IN HIGH DEMAND, *Catman* #1 (May 1941, LEFT) continues to set new price records around the country.

ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL and sought after covers of the series adorns *Mystery Men Comics* #10 (May 1940, BELOW). Note that the Oriental villains are rendered in shades of green to perfectly complement the yellow background, Blue Beetle's azure costume, and the shapely but helpless heroine's crimson dress.

CLUTCHING HIS DAGGER, an Arabic villain is subdued by a gun-wielding Green Mask on the cover of *Mystery Men Comics* #5 (Dec 1939, BELOW RIGHT).

MAD DOCTOR MANIA dominates the cover of *Mystery Men Comics* #1 (Aug 1939, LEFT).

RESCUED FROM CERTAIN DOOM by the Green Mask, a blonde victim gets "carried away" on the cover of *Mystery Men Comics* #3 (Oct 1939, BELOW).

The Fantastic Four "In the house of horrors" (RIGHT) was one of the last Big-Little-Books from Whitman Publishing to have "hard" covers. Collectors search out this scarce 1968 Marvel collectible because every right-hand page feature full color Kirby art.

The Hulk and Spider-Man (RIGHT) were featured on the 1967 card set. Because they were "stickers" as well, many adorned lunch boxes, lockers, and notebooks... making them all the more scarce.

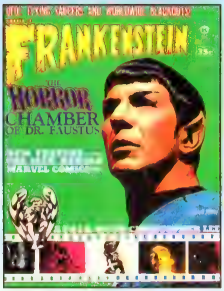
Five of the Lancer paperbacks from 1966 featuring black and white reprints of Marvel comics (BELOW).

All of the items in the MMMS membership kit were pictured in the initial ad except the most exciting one... a 33 1/3 RPM record of the Marvel bullpen (LEFT). On this scarce vinyl Stan Lee "talks" to various members of the bullpen. When he finally gets to Steve Ditko, Lee says that Steve "has just jumped out of the window". This approach was indicative of Ditko's well known aversion to publicity.

Trading Card #60 (LEFT) of the 66-card set (?) released by Marvel in 1967.

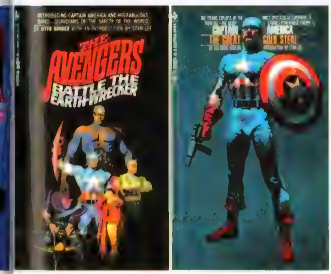
The Avengers Battle The Earth-Wrecker (Bantam Books, 1967, BELOW LEFT) was the subject of fan controversy at the time of publication.

Captain America The Great Gold Steal (Bantam Books, 1967, BELOW) is another collectibles "curiosity" from Marvel's first decade.



Castle of Frankenstein #11 (1967, left) features an articles on Jim Steranko at Marvel, Wally Wood, and early Star Trek.

The covers to 45 RPM records feature the Hulk (UPPER LEFT, FACING PAGE) and Thor (BELOW).



COLOR GALLERY

THESE THREE ISSUES OF STARTLING TERROR TALES are excellent examples of L.B. Cole's "posterized" style of cover color composition. Although all issues are presently in high demand by 1950s collectors, #13 (Feb 1953, UPPER LEFT), #5 (Sep 1953, LEFT), and #11 (Aug 1952, ABOVE) are presently among the highest demand books of the entire pre-code horror genre.

© STAR PUBLICATIONS

STARTLING TERROR TALES

— BY STEVE SIBRA

In the early 50s, there was mighty competition for the comic-buying buck (or dime as the case may be). With more titles on the stands than at any time before and probably since, the smaller comic companies vied mightily for display space. One company relied on the strength of the unique cover imagery of its co-founder and "head honcho" to make its books stand out from the pack. That company was Star Publications and the artist was L.B. Cole. With only a tiny handful of exceptions, most of them photo covers, Mr. Cole's stunning artwork graced the covers of essentially the entire Star line throughout the company's six-year life span.

I've long been fascinated with the cover artwork of L.B. Cole in general and with the Star Publications library of work in particular. These few hundred comics have a "company look" all their own which is even more impressive when you consider that one man is almost entirely responsible for that look. Star published horror, crime, romance, jungle, western, funny-animal books, and more; but all have that unmistakable "Star look." For me collecting Star comics is almost a separate hobby from my other comic collecting interests.... get even a few dozen of these babies alone in a box and spend some time perusing and savoring them... and I think you'll find that they become almost a "genre" in and of themselves.

Eventually, any inquiry will try to go beyond the spectacular and high-impact covers, and ask the question "Is there more to these comics than just the brilliance of L.B. Cole?"

To answer this legitimate question, let's examine one of Star's more dynamic horror entries, *Startling Terror Tales*.

Perhaps the first "startling" aspect of this title is the numbering system. The series starts with #10, followed by #11, 12, 13, and 14. It then switches to #4 and continues through #11. In the 1950's it was not uncommon for a title to pick up numbering from another book, then later revert to the appropriate number for that title. Every time a publisher started a new #1, they had to fight the news dealers tendency to not display the book because, unlike today, a #1 on a comic was not a sure sales boost. News dealers would rather give their limited rack space to a book that's been around, since it was more likely a proven seller. So attempts to fool the dealer into thinking that the comic had been coming out for a while were not uncommon... that's why, for example, Standard started most of their new titles at the time with issue #5, and why many #1's and #2's had no number on the cover at all. But that still doesn't tell us why Star began renumbering by designating their sixth issue of *Starling Terror Tales* as #4. The most recent *Overstreet Price Guide* states that the first issue, #10, branched off in five directions, becoming the #11 issue of *Confessions of Love*, *Horrors*, *Terrifying Tales*, *Terrors Of The Jungle* and, of course, *Startling Terror Tales*. This is probably correct (but who knows why they did it this way?), Yet the perplexing mystery remains why is the sixth issue #4?

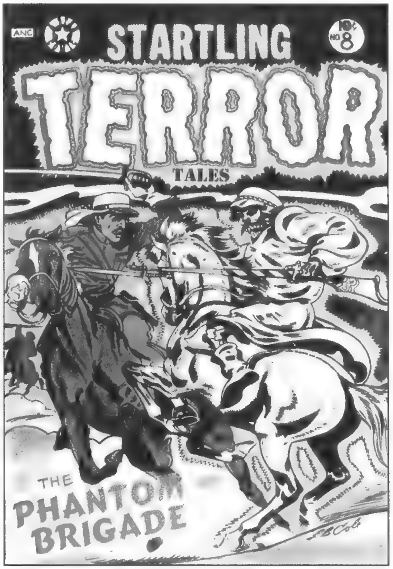
For some reason, *Overstreet* designates #11 as "1a", #12 as "1b", then #13 as #2 and #14 as #3. I have no proof of the motivations or intentions of the folks at Star but I feel it's more logical to view the first two issues as "one-shots", since they differ in both content and appearance from the issues that follow. Both #1 and #11 reprint book-length Fox one-shots, namely *A Star Presentation* #3 and A Feature Presentation #5. None of the later issues contain book-length stories, though most, if not all, do contain reprints from Fox. Further, although all the issues of *Startling Terror* have L.B. Cole covers, the covers to these first two issues (#11 in particular) are different in style than the later issues. Many L.B. Cole covers, (especially his horror work) have that unique "phosphores-

L.B. COLE'S CATCHY COVER on *Startling Terror Tales* #8 (Feb 1954) was somewhat of a departure... although the ghostly raider still sports a classic Cole skull for a head. Humorously, L.B. added a moustache, just for effect.

cent" or "posterized" quality that is one of his trademarks; however, these first two covers seem to play down or even lack that trait, while the rest of the run literally "revels" in it! The one exception is the final issue, but it should be noted that it's a crime cover, not a horror cover.

Perhaps the first two issues were all that were originally planned... but for whatever reason, it was decided to continue the series, and a thematic tone was developed. This would make issue #12 the "first issue" in the "second series" and go a long way in logically explaining the sixth issue's designation as #4.

By now I'm sure you are anxiously awaiting the moment when I get a life and get around to looking at the comics themselves instead of obsessing about the numbering. Okay, point taken... let's see what's really so interesting about *Startling Terror Tales*. The first issue (as noted above) reprints "Dr. Jekyll and Mr.. Hyde" from Fox's *A Star Presentation* #3, with art by Wood and Harrison. This is a nicely rendered story, though the Star version has a couple of problems. As with many of the Star reprints of Fox material, the printing quality is not first rate. (Blame it on worn out printing plates, most likely.) Also, Fox was known for printing the first page of the first story on the inside front cover. This means rebound and/or reprinted versions are often missing one page. Such is the case here; although the story actually begins on page two so nothing pertinent to the storytelling is lost. Besides, these guys were going to call the sixth issue #4, so why not start the issue with page two? Sorry, there I go again...



I don't own a copy of *A Star Presentation* #3, but the last page of *Startling Terror Tales* #10 seems to leave us hanging a bit. I suspect the ending of this tale might have been abridged as well. *Startling Terror Tales* #11 leads off another Fox reprint by treating us to one of the best L.B. Cole covers ever... what I feel is the definitive "spider" cover. And the inside's pretty cool, too.

Again, the first page is missing but again, it's a poster-like "splash" page, not part of the storytelling. The story from *A Feature Presentation* #5, originally called "The Black Tarantula," is here retitled "The Ghost Spider of Death." Most story references to the Black Tarantula (but not all) have been rather hastily relettered to read "Ghost Spider of Death." Okay, I admit it, "Black Tarantula" is a snappier name than the somewhat cumbersome "Ghost Spider of Death." Nonetheless, this is a truly great comic and one of my favorite horror books.

In addition to the spectacular cover (the original Fox version has a great cover as well) this is a superb story of a vampiric "spider-man" who preys on the inhabitants of what appears to be medieval Europe. Although he's a 250-year-old dead man, Count Rorret, the Ghost Spider, has a one-track mind fueled by lust and focused on the beautiful Princess Elthena, who he early on turns into a ghost spider like himself. This is accomplished when the Count becomes a hairy arachnid the size of a large footstool and attaches himself to her jugular.

As the story progresses and the love triangle develops between Rorret, Elthena and her true love, the hapless Leopold (possessing a very secondary intellect, sort of a Middle Ages Jimmy Olsen type), we find that Rorret has an affinity for changing himself and others into all manner of critters and monsters. In fact, he's just downright wishy-washy about it. He turns Leopold into a goat... but only for one panel, and by the time a single "B-a-a-a-a-" has crossed his lips, he's human again! Later, he makes him into a mouse for half a page. Several victims end up as pedal-car-size spiders, sometimes retaining their human heads, sometimes not. A number of henchmen, looking like deformed relatives of Casper, come and go. Briefly Count Rorret becomes a skyscraper-dwarfing, world-threatening glob of hideous ghostly goo, but apparently tires quickly of

that as well. This story is convoluted and bizarre and truly defies any attempt to recount but, trust me, it's a beauty and has a top-notch "classic" to boot. Check it out, if you can.

Issue #12 (the third issue) is typical of many of the issues that follow: an excellent "bloody wet" horror cover fronting what is essentially a crime comic, made up mostly of Fox reprints. The following issue, however, has one of the title's best covers and perhaps the best story in the lot. Issue #13, the fourth issue, features Jay Disbrow's "Love From A Gorgon", a love/horror classic with more than a bit of absurd humor thrown in. The story concerns the plight of Professor Ujyra Vangoth, a sophisticated and scholarly man of letters who finds himself besieged by a sometimes invisible, sometimes whimpering, but always punctual, slimy and lust-ridden monster from another world.

When the love struck Gorgon does make an appearance, it is hairy, powerful, and morosely ugly... described by Prof. Vangoth as having "no control over itself! It's a slobbering idiot!" It comes back repeatedly, invading his home ("the cat is fond of it, but the dog hates it!") and cajoling him for a kiss on its slimy drooling mouth. After the sobbing but amorous monstrosity succeeds in kissing the Prof, he frantically tells his friend, "It kissed me! I can't stand it! I'll go out of my mind if this continues!"

The Gorgon eventually tells Prof. Vangoth it has chosen him as its mate because of his great intelligence and understanding. Ujyra's great understanding, however, is unable to get him beyond the creature's "pure butt-ugliness" and lack of social graces: he tells it, "I could never be mated to you! You're ugly and detestable... you have no self-control!"

This six-pager is jam-packed with that great comic book goofiness that seems to define some of the best work of the 1950s and is (I feel) a bonafide classic. Check out Mike Benton's fine book (*Horror Comics-The Illustrated History*) for another description of this remarkable story. Or, better yet, track down a copy of *Startling Terror Tales* #13; you won't be disappointed.

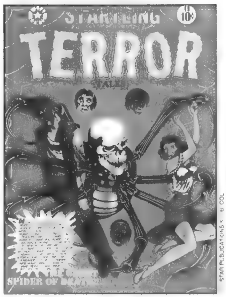
With a couple of notable exceptions, the rest of the run contains essentially standard crime fare (often Fox reprints) with a couple of war stories thrown in. These are of course dressed up with excellent trademark L.B. Cole "bloody horror" covers; even the war cover on #6 is given the glowing, gruesome, blood-red treatment, making it more of a horror cover than anything else.

The cover story from issue #7 is a true horror tale, involving swamps and living skeletons, always good ingredients for terror. Numbers 8 and 11 (1954 issue) have reprints of Rudy Palais work; #8's story is uninspired but the offering in #11, "The Strangler," has its moments. The cover to #11, the final issue of the run, is the lone disappointment of the bunch, being a simple (and rather boring) crime cover.

Issues #9 and #10 lead off with horror stories to accompany their excellent covers, before lapsing back to the usual crime/reprint fare. "The Horrible Entity," another little Jay Disbrow masterpiece, is the featured entry in #10. It seems that some "unknown intelligence" is cooking the brains of all the world's top nuclear scientists... knocking them off, one by one, thus reducing the world's atomic know-how.

America's top nuclear physicist, Professor Post, is receiving threatening phone calls. The F.B.I. (apparently under the direction of Larry, Moe and Curly) bungles around the general area, giving lip service to the notion of protecting the good Professor, but actually do very little. Eventually they leave one agent to guard him, but he promptly falls asleep on the couch while the evil goop-monster attacks through the phone receiver (what a mess!)

Although this motor-mouthed purple cyclops is huge and possesses great strength, horrid fangs, and octopus-like tentacles... it chooses to kill with a "beam of pure mental energy" directed at the professor's head, "causing the skull cap to disintegrate and the brain cells to collapse." Whew! I was willing to bet it was just going to talk him to death.



REPEATING HIS SKULL-HEADED SPIDER THEME from *Suspense* #8, *Startling Terror Tales* #11 (Aug 1952) has become highly sought after by L.B. Cole collectors, pre-code horror collectors, cover collectors, and esoteric collectors.

Later, F.B.I. Agent Bradley awakens and, seeing the victim's smoldering head, exclaims "Good Lord! He's dead! And I was sleeping on the job!" No problemo, says his boss. "You did your best, Frank! There's no point in worrying about it now!" What happened to the verbose, myopic monstrosity? Well, I guess, we'll never know.

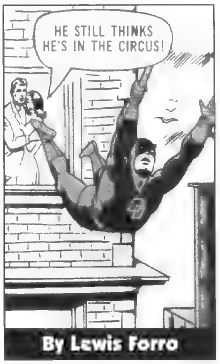
Most collectors feel (as do I) that the best reason for collecting *Startling Terror Tales* is the superb run of stunning L.B. Cole covers. However, there are a couple of other bright spots, including a few fine horror tales. For the most part, these books are not that pricey, with only the first two issues Guiding for more than $30 in fine condition. And there's essentially "no extra charge" for the two issues containing the Disbrow stories, which are truly gems. It may take you some time to find them, but I say, scare up some old copies of *Startling Terror Tales*... You'll be glad you did! ■

Steve Sibra was born and raised on a farm in Montana. After 15 years in the big city, he sold his comic book store and returned to his home state, where he resides with his wife Stacey and their three cats. Steve is a lifelong collector of comic books, lamps, cheap African statues, Viewmasters, radios, matchbooks, and Marx playsets. Steve wishes it was the 1950's... though he barely remembers them.

Marvelous **Marvel** *Memorabilia*

Collecting during the Marvel Age!

I was eleven years old in 1965. Nothing remarkable about that except that it was an awfully good time to be reading comic books published by the Marvel Comics Group. Marvel had been building artistic momentum for the previous three years and by the mid 1960s they really seemed to be hitting their stride. Dramatic stories with Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko artwork (that grew more finely polished month after month) created an air of excitement that converted me from an occasional reader to a hard core fan and collector.



After 1969 or so the magic began to fade. Ironically, as Marvel became the leading comic book company it began to look more like DC comics recently overthrown rival. Marvel began to resemble a corporate giant, grinding out adequately crafted books, with some commercial appeal but with little of the heart or personality that had set them on the road to greatness in the first place. To me (as with most CBM readers) the warmest memories of reading and collecting Marvel comics likely reside in the 1960s. Marvel was full of fire and lightening in those days and anybody who was there can never forget it.

In that regard, I would like to share some of my memories of that special time by offering an itemized look at some of the earliest Marvel related memorabilia. Lack of funds prevented me from buying the posters and T-shirts that Marvel offered in its advertisements, so I'll focus on more obscure material that was never advertised in the comics.

I was an avid Marvel collector by 1965, and I considered it my "mission in life" to acquire as many back issues as possible. This was no easy task for an eleven year old boy in a small town like Savannah, Georgia. Few of my friends were comic book readers and the ones who were leaned more to DC. There were no second hand bookstores within bicycle range and of course there were no comic conventions, shops, or mail order dealers in those days. What to do? In late December of 1965 I risked a hard earned nickel on a postage stamp and wrote directly to Marvel Comics, asking them if they had any back issues for sale.

I was flabbergasted to actually receive a reply. Marvel sent me a one page mimeographed letter listing comics not available for sale. They had very few back issues in stock. The hand written issue numbers on the right are ones I needed that were available but notice the expensive back issue price of 20¢ for a 12 cent comic. I did manage to snag the *Spider-Man* #29 and the *Daredevil* #10 and 11 — and still have them today. They're my own personal Marvel "file" copies. I saved this letter because of the personalized inscription to me from one of the gods on Mt. Olympus. I've included the letter here as an historical curiosity since Marvel never advertised back issues for sale and to this day I don't think many folks know that they actually sold them.

Like many Marvel readers of that era, I wrote my share of fan letters. Marvel was very aggressive in promoting reader loyalty by publishing lots of correspondence, and even if you didn't get your letter published right away they usually sent you a card of acknowledgment. I'm sure I'm not the only fan whose knees buckled a little the first time one of those postcards arrived in the mail. The back of one of these cards is shown as at the bottom of PAGE 51.

The handwriting refers to back issues of *Monsters Unlimited* and the new Lancer paperbacks I had inquired about in a letter. If your letter was scheduled for publication,

Marvel mania was more than comics... "true believers" had to have everything Marvel!

you received a card telling you what Marvel Comic it would appear in. Marvel announced in 1966 that, due to all their comics now having letters pages and the increasing volume of mail, they would no longer be able to send out cards with individual replies. Does anybody have one dated after 1966 by any chance?

In late 1964 Marvel began teasing us with a mysterious acronym: the M.M.M.S. Finally, in a full page ad in comics dated January 1965 the "Merry Marvel Marching Society" was unveiled. Marvel's first fan club offered a membership kit full of neat stuff, but it came at (what even Marvel conceded) was a fairly steep price tag, a whole dollar; more than the price of eight comic books!

All of the Marvel goodies in the membership kit were pictured in the initial ad except the most exciting one, a 33 rpm record of the Marvel bullpen. For those who came along later or couldn't raise the extra dollar in 1965) "The Voices Of Marvel" [SEE TOP OF PAGE 43]. On the record Stan Lee talks to the Marvel bullpenners of the day. When he gets to Steve Ditko, Lee describes him jumping out the window, so we never get to hear Ditko's voice. This incident (and the lack of Ditko's photograph with the rest of the bullpen in *Marvel Tales Annual* #1) are two early examples of Ditko's life-time aversion to publicity.

In a recent catalog from "Bud Plant Illustrated Books"

FACING PAGE AND ABOVE: **Examples of the hard-to-find 1967 Marvel trading card set.**

The 2nd Fantastic Four paperback from Lancer Books (1968).

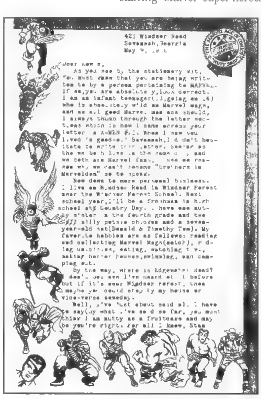
A rare piece of Marvel Stationary from the mid '60s. The drawings around the margins are by Jack Kirby and depict 12 classic Marvel characters (including the Two-gun Kid). Emblazoned in the upper right-hand corner is "the Marvel age of comics - 'nuff said! - E Pluribus Marvel".

an M.M.M.S kit was offered for sale for $150. This is the only one I've seen offered for sale in 30 years. I don't know how many kits were produced (or survived), but it does appear hardly anybody who has one wants to part with it.

Sometime in 1966, M.M.M.S. members received their first issue of the club newsletter The Merry Marvel Messenger. It was supposed to be an ongoing publication but this was the only issue to appear. It is historically noteworthy because it contains a Jack Kirby biography which marks the first time Marvel presented us with any detailed information on one of its staff members. (A piece of Marvel stationery **SHOWN BELOW**) is the only item mentioned here that is pictured in Marvel's advertisements from the mid 1960s. I received this letter from a Marvel fan who lived across town and had seen my letter in a Marvel comic. I think 30-year-old examples of Marvel stationery is quite historical and might be pretty scarce these days.

Late 1966 saw the Marvel bullpen page bragging about the upcoming debut of animated for television cartoons starring Marvel super-heroes. A blurb from an early February 1966 issue of *TV Guide* is interesting for two reasons.

First, Marvel was always careful to note in their bullpen pages any media references to their company... they missed this one. Second, this may be the first mention of Marvel characters in a nationally distributed magazine. (Can any *CBM* reader help to confirm this?)


421 Wladder Road
Smallville, Marsh
May 7, 19--
Dear Jack,
As you see by the stationery with
Mr. Most make that you are being write
ten to by a person pertaining to MARVEL.
If anyone are absolute y-boss correct.
I am an Infant teenager (going on 14)
who is absolutely wild on Marvel mags,
and we all greed Marvel was way ahead,
I always shown through the letter sec-
tion which is here I take privacy your
letter a HUGE O.K. Does I see you
lived in good-old Savannah, I don't bel-
ieve to write that, either, see-ar as
the we be living on the same - part
we both are Marvel fans, one we rea-
ders we, we really become "creature in
Marvelese" as to speak.
See there is two (or pre-teen) hinteens.
I live on Wladder Road in Wladder Forest
near the Wladder Forest School. Next
school year, I'll be a freshman in Jun-
ior High and Smarty Day... here I am sit-
ting right a the fourth grade and two-
story jelly pelvis children and a seven-
year-old cat(Donald a Timothy Tom). My
favorite hobbies are as follows: reading
and collecting Marvel Magazine(s), rid-
ing unicycles, sailing, watching t-v,
making horror movies,grinding, and com-
piling out.
By the way, where is Edgewater Jeans?
I don't see any I've seen at Belk-
Tom's, not even Wigsbey Peters. Does
he make the jeans worn by my hero ar
Kids-Heros, Marvel Kids?
Well, I've about said all. I have
the major what I've to do for, you must
know I am busty as a fruitcake and any,
the you're right, I've said I have, Stan.

Marvel Products

Marvel had been flamboyantly hawking their own character-related products in their house advertisements since early 1965, and I don't recall seeing any non-advertised products in stores until 1966. Some of the following are the first such Marvel products sold during 1966-67.

My realization of products beyond the comics happened when I was at the "7/11" convenience store, where I purchased my comic books. While standing at the checkout counter I noticed some bubble gum cards in a bright yellow wrapper. They had Marvel super-heroes emblazoned all over them... which, of course, made them a mandatory purchase. This was Marvel's first card set, released in 1966. There were 66 cards in the set and featured previously published panels from the comic books. The back of each card had a piece of a puzzle showing an array of Marvel characters. I never obtained a complete set, so I never bothered assembling the puzzle. (I hope some *CBM* reader sends us a picture of the complete puzzle.)

Then in 1967 Marvel released its second card set **[SEE PAGES 43, 48, AND 49]**. The cards were numbered like the first set, but with no mention of how many cards were in the set. The highest numbered card I have is 54 but to this day I have no way of knowing if there were more. Of the two sets, the 1967 set is by far the rarest.

I've seen a few cards and one complete set from 1966 for sale over the years, but never any cards from the 1967 group. The reason is the 1967 cards were the "peel-off" sticky-back variety. The temptation to plaster them all over lunch boxes, lockers, and notebooks must have been irresistible!

On another day in 1966, I stumbled across two 45 RPM records in a department store, one featuring the Hulk **[PAGE 42]** and the other Thor **[PAGE 43]**. On one side they have radio-drama type stories and on the other (believe it or not) a song!. The Hulk's song is by far the better of the two, but good luck finding either of these. I imagine these are two of the rarest Marvel novelty items going as I have never seen or heard of any others in 30 years. (Surely some *CBM* readers must have these tucked away... please write in and let us know.)

In 1966 Lancer Books released several paperbacks with black and white reprints of Marvel stories. This is the first time any Marvel material was printed in paperback format and the first time Marvel licensed its characters to another publishing company. The first volume was *The Fantastic Four* **[PAGE 42 AND ABOVE]**. These Lancer paperbacks don't seem especially rare as I do see them at conventions and comic shops fairly often.

More interesting to me in the paperback arena was the 1967 Bantam Books publication of *The Avengers Battle The Earth Wrecker* **[PAGE 43]** by science fiction pulp writer Otto Binder. This was the first novel about Marvel characters and the first time any of them were depicted by a professional artist outside of the Marvel bullpen. I was very impressed with the book's striking cover art as the Avengers, especially Goliath, looked far more somber and menacing than the comic book version. I was startled a few months later when the editor of a Marvel fanzine reviewed the book

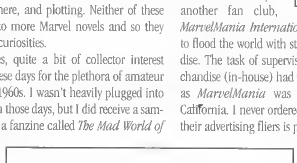
and said this about the cover: "*...the uncredited cover painting is not realistic. The only good figure is the glowering, bulking pose that Goliath strikes... Quicksilver is pictured as too muscular... the Scarlet Witch is far too sexy...her costume is far to revealing and is not faithful to the one in the magazines. The Captain America and Hawkeye figures, albeit muscular, are not really well done.*"

This review sparked a number of responses to the fanzine editor, and I was relieved to find out I was not the only fan who liked the art. One of the letter writers said, "*...I must agree with the Avengers novel review. My only disagreement lies in your opinion of the cover. I found it very good work, actually improving the characters! I like a sexy Wanda anyway.*"

The fanzine editor also had blasted the "...stock pulp writing..." style and I agreed with him… but here's what Marvel writer Roy Thomas had to say: " ...Agreed... the Avengers paperback leaves something to be desired for the knowing Marvelite, but-as you noticed-it's written in a different style...we appreciate the difficulties my good friend Otto Binder faced in writing about characters with whom he was not familiar. All in all, we'd say he did a good job." Kind words from Mr. Thomas, but unless you do enjoy "superficial pulp writing" just pick up this book for its cover.

The second novel based on Marvel characters, Bantam Books' *Captain America The Great Gold Steal* **[PAGE 43]** however is well worth reading. Author Ted White was a polished writer with an excellent command of characterization, dramatic atmosphere, and plotting. Neither of these books ignited a trend to more Marvel novels and so they stand today as isolated curiosities.

Speaking of fanzines, quite a bit of collector interest seems to be building these days for the plethora of amateur zines published in the 1960s. I wasn't heavily plugged into that aspect of fandom in those days, but I did receive a sample issue in the mail of a fanzine called *The Mad World of Marveldom*. The name was changed to *Marvel Mirror* with issue #2. This was a very well written zine with offset printing and contributions from "name fans" like Tony Isabella and Dwight Decker. The quotes from the Avengers novel were taken from the first two issues. The front cover of the first issue is reproduced for old times sake.


MANY THANKS FOR YOUR THOUGHTFUL LETTER. WE GREATLY APPRECIATE YOUR INTEREST AND HOPE WE SHALL CONTINUE TO DESERVE IT.
CORDIALLY YOURS,

And then there's *Castle Of Frankenstein* #11 **[PAGE 43]** from 1967 is a special favorite of mine. Marvel Comics had received many plugs by newspapers and magazines by now, but I believe this was the first time they were referenced on the cover of a magazine. At any rate, this issue has a short but excellent feature on the then "hot" Marvel artist Jim Steranko (with two pages of pictures of him). We get a two page review of Wallace Wood's Witzend with nice illustrations and the debut of a column called "Comic Fandom." Of course, the main attraction is what must be one of the first Star Trek covers accompanied by a long article with lots of photos. The Star Trek-Marvel Comics-comic fandom articles make this magazine a 1960s popular culture icon! In later *Castle Of Frankenstein* back issue ordering pages this was the only issue always listed as "sold out." Naturally.

In late 1969 Marvel unleashed yet another fan club, *MarvelMania International*, whose primary mission was to flood the world with still more Marvel related merchandise. The task of supervising the production of such merchandise (in-house) had apparently grown too burdensome as *MarvelMania* was headquartered in Culver City, California. I never ordered any of their products but one of their advertising fliers is pictured **[ABOVE]**.

Marvel unleashed yet another fan club in 1969... MarvelMania International! Above is one of their flyers advertising the club catalog, certificate, club magazine, membership card, and posters.

I hope looking over some of these early Marvel artifacts has rekindled some pleasant memories from the old timers out there and perhaps given some younger fans a small taste of what it was like to be a Marvel fan in the 1960s. I don't claim to be an expert on Marvel memorabilia and, as noted earlier, I couldn't afford to purchase those great T-shirts, sweatshirts, posters and the like that were advertised in Marvel comics from 1965 on. Hopefully, some *CBM* readers who had a better paying paper route can send pictures of some of that great stuff too. Thanks for reading and "make mine Marvel!" ■

Marvels card of acknowlegement for fan letters. The card at left also supplies the address of Lancer Books in New York.

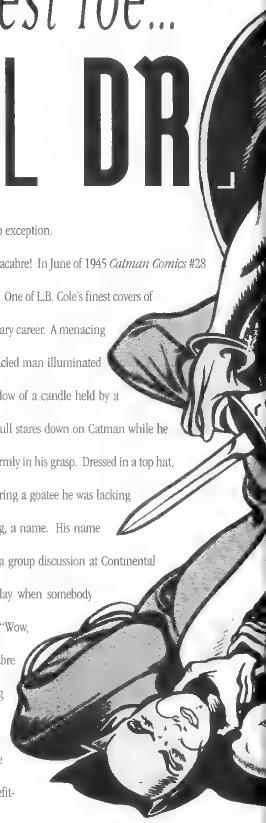
Cat-Man's greatest foe...

THE EVIL DR_

Comic book publishers everywhere were searching for someone... for something that their costumed heroes could battle. As World War II came to an end the evil nemesis of Hitler, Tojo, and Mussolini no longer posed a threat to the American people. The wartime propaganda theme covers that had been so prominent on comics were no longer relevant. America had won the war and was waiting for its real-life heroes to come home. What seemed to be a reason for celebration on the home front, spelled out a potential doom for the comic industry. With the neutralization of the Axis powers, many costumed heroes found themselves at an impasse.

Comic book publishers everywhere were searching for someone, for something, that their costumed heroes could battle. For many of our heroes, a turn to crime fighting seemed to be the answer. An endless procession of evildoers were paraded past young readers as they sought out their favorite heroes from the newsstand. The Catman and Kitten were no exception.

Enter Dr. Macabre! In June of 1945 *Catman Comics* #28 hit the stands. One of L.B. Cole's finest covers of his extraordinary career. A menacing looking monacled man illuminated by the eerie glow of a candle held by a candelabra skull stares down on Catman while he holds Kitten firmly in his grasp. Dressed in a top hat, tails, and wearing a goatee he was lacking only one thing, a name. His name evolved from a group discussion at Continental Comics one day when somebody piped up, "Wow, what a macabre appearing guy!!" Naturally, the name was befit-



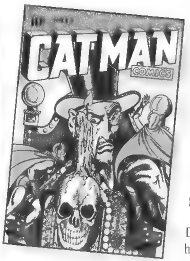
MACABRE!

By Phil Barnhart

ting and a new nemesis for The Catman and Kitten was born! He is Dr. Macabre, monocle and all!! The artwork in this first issue was handled by Bob Fujitani, a master of line and shadow.

A new menace has come to America to take his place in the black hall of fame reserved for those who follow the bloody trail of crime and evil... Doctor Macabre! Out of the shadows, to combat this new menace are the ever alert Catman and Kitten, whose feline-influenced minds are filled with hate for their natural enemy-**Rats!!! Human rats,** who gnaw at the pillars of decency and justice! Dr. Macabre has

This article was submitted to CBM by The Comic Archives... in remembrance of L. B. Cole, 1918-1995.



LARGER THAN LIFE, the monocled Dr. Macabre menaces Catman & Kitten on the surreal and highly sought after *Catman* #28 (1945).

arrived in America to team up with Drake D'Arsay (racket king of a large west coast city), DuMont LeRoix, and Cut Barnaby. He and his ward Lenore have arrived in this strange land from Lisbon. That following afternoon Captain Merryweather (The Catman) and his young ward Katie (Kitten) are entering a large office building on the main street when Katie, by happenstance, is knocked to the ground by Lenore in a rush to exit the building.

In the process she drops a strand of pearls which David Merryweather returns to her as he helps her to her feet. Shouts of robbery and help echo from up the stairs as Lenore rushes from the building. As Merryweather tends to the shouts for help he sends Katie to follow the girl... suspecting she has something to do with the strange happenings. We soon discover that those pearls were none other than the fabulous "Crocodile Tear Pearls" worth $200,000, owned by Pierre Valoy, one of the biggest brokers in town.

Katie, now in her Kitten garb, is captured by the thugs as she follows them. She is forced to call Catman for help! Once drawn into the trap, Catman is also overpowered and captured by Dr. Macabre and his rogues gallery! With Catman under control, Dr. Macabre now expounds on his elaborate scheme to obtained the Crocodile Tear Pearls. Lenore was sent (under the control of a hypnotic trance) to meet with Pierre Valoy posing as Doctor Arnold Peabody's wife, the best brain specialist in town.. She tells Mr. Valoy that her husband has decided to buy the pearls as an anniversary gift and that he should deliver them to the doctors office at seven p.m. that night at which time he would also receive payment. She then made an appointment with Dr. Peabody telling him that she was Mrs. Valoy and that she feared for her husband's sanity. At the doctor's office, so distraught, she sobbed out a story of her poor husbands dissolution over those pearls. "He goes around presenting everybody with a bill for them, please give him a check to humor him... not a good check... just to keep him happy". When Valoy arrives he finds Lenore in the anteroom. She convinces him to let her put on the pearls and surprise her husband while he goes into the next room to settle the bill. It doesn't take long for Valoy and Peabody realize that they have been duped. Just as Dr. Macabre finishes up his story Catman swings into action and Kitten follows suit. Making a dash for freedom they escape into the night with the pearls and their lives. But this isn't the end, as David Merryweather says "I have a hunch that Dr. Macabre won't stop at this... we're sworn enemies... and that poor girl Lenore.. I hope I'll be able to help her... soon." And so ends the first catfight between The Catman and Kitten with Dr. Macabre!

Splash panel opener for "Catman vs. Dr. Macabre" in *Catman* #28.

CATMAN: INCLUDING PUBL. & I. B. COLE

The Touch of Death

The cover of *Catman* #29 (August 1945) depicts a surprised Dr. Macabre about to slice into a helpless Kitten with a dagger. It seems the tables are turned when Dr. Macabre finds himself surrounded by Catman and a group of his feline counterparts. The artwork in this issue is again ably handled by Bob Fujitani in a story titled "The Man Who Conquered Death". Dr. Macabre leads his evil minions on a mission of plunder. A full moon looks down on the nocturnal marauders bent on the theft of the Z-Ray. Once inside the house and laboratory where the Z-Ray is kept, its inventor is forced to reveal its hiding place.

After taking possession of the Z-Ray device Dr. Macabre guns down the inventor. In the delirium of a dying man he says "Go! Take your cursed prize! But you'll carry your own doom! Ha-Ha-Ha!" With their getaway complete, Dr. Macabre grips the driver on the shoulder and tells him to stop at the next corner... and with Dr. Macabre's touch the driver dies instantly. Dr. Macabre looks on in disbelief at the drivers body spilled out onto the curb. His cohort exclaims "The Z-Ray! Look at your hand! Its all Red!"

As he begins to flee Dr. Macabre grabs for him, he too falls to the ground in a slump. Dr. Macabre now realizes what the dying scientist meant, the cursed Z-Ray has made him a monster... his touch is death! He disposes of the two bodies by placing them in his car and setting it ablaze.

Driven by the desperation of his condition, Dr. Macabre realizes that the inventor of the Z-Ray must have had an antidote at his laboratory, otherwise he couldn't have kept such a dangerous device so near to him. Called in to investigate, The Catman and Kitten anticipate a move by Dr. Macabre since he was found to be the owner of the burned automobile. They were waiting for him in the shadows outside of his residence, the feline crimefighters follow him to the inventors home. He breaks into the house (where the murder occurred the day before) by burning a hole in the door with his bare hand!

Dr. Macabre is successful in finding the antidote and makes good his escape after a brief struggle with Catman and Kitten. Searching the laboratory Catman and Kitten

find the dead scientist's notebook. They discover the reason for Macabre's return, the antidote R.V.2 is the only thing that can repair the damage caused by the Z-Ray. By printing a phony newspaper headline they trick Dr. Macabre into believing that he made away with a useless substitute. This time he enters the inventors house by using his hand to burn a hole through the wall. That Z-Ray is really something! Catman and Kitten are waiting for Dr. Macabre and in the ensuing struggle manage to overcome him without being touched. They slip some rubberized gloves (apparently unaffected by the Z-Ray) on an unconscious Dr. Macabre and then turn him over to the police. Will the prison walls hold this evil genius?

Hugo and the Cardiff Sisters

Catman #30 (December 1945) again finds Dr. Macabre in the act of performing unspeakable Kitten abuse. This time he is attempting to roast Kitten with a cauldron of molten metal. Catman swings into action and will no doubt save her. The artwork in this issue was handled by George Gregg.

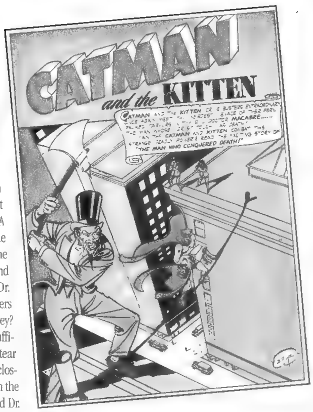
The Cardiff sisters (Deborah and Abigail) are about to employ a new butler and maid. Too bad the others were so unfortunate to have discovered their connection to Dr. Macabre. Seeing the ad for domestic help, David Merryweather recalls that a homicide inspector mentioned that the people who answered the same ad a few days before had mysteriously disappeared! Catman and Kitten decide to investigate as David Merryweather and his ward Katie. Upon their arrival they are greeted by the Cardiff sisters and surprisingly, a very large ape by the name of Hugo! It seems Hugo is the Doctor's "favorite" companion. Doctor who you might wonder? Why Dr. Macabre of course. He emerges from the parlor and commands Hugo to seize our heroes. It seems Dr. Macabre has plans to use a mob of trained gorillas to carry out his plans of crime. Catman and Kitten (now in costume) are removed to the dungeon where the untrained gorillas are kept. Freeing themselves of the ropes that bind them, they attempt to escape the dungeon through a ventilation shaft. Only one thing stands in the way, the great ape Hugo. Catman deftly pulls out some tear gas pellets (from his flea collar?) and dashes them on the ground at the apes feet.

Making their way up the ventilation shaft they come face to face with a gun toting Dr. Macabre and the Cardiff sisters. The enraged Hugo, following close behind, mistakes his masters for Catman and Kitten and mistakenly seizes them and falls from the roof with his masters in tow. Is this finally the end of Dr. Macabre? The zoo recovers the remainder of the apes, but Hugo is not among them.

Hypodermics and Hypnotic Serum

The cover of *Catman* #31 (June 1946) shows Catman with an unconscious Kitten cradled in his arms at a slight disadvantage as he is surrounded by a pack of growling wolves. Canine vs. feline, this time it looks as if Dr. Macabre is in total control. The artwork in this issue was again handled by George Gregg.

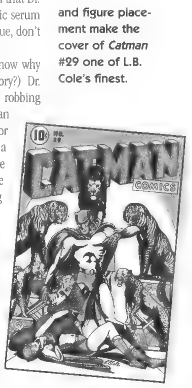
Our story picks up with Dr. Macabre in mid-flight via Hugo the gorilla. A policeman spies the falling bodies just in the nick of time to step in and break the fall of Dr. Macabre. The Cardiff sisters are not so lucky, or are they? A bleary eyed Hugo, sufficiently enraged by the tear gas and his abrupt fall, closes in on the two figures on the ground. The quick witted Dr. Macabre exclaims "My pet gorilla went berserk and threw my old aunties and me out the window! Quick! Your Gun!"



SPLASH PANEL for "The Man Who Conquered Death" in *Catman* #29.

The first shot drops Hugo in his tracks, the second shot eliminates the officer. Recognizing an opportunity when it presents itself, Dr. Macabre defaces the officer and swaps clothes to make it look as if Hugo did indeed kill Dr. Macabre. He slinks off into the night wearing the officers uniform. He decides this is a good time to pay a visit to Professor Spellman. The same Professor Spellman that Dr. Macabre made into a killer with his own hypnotic serum that he took from him in Paris. Very smooth segue, don't you think?

Under the influence of the hypnotic serum, (now why would you keep this stuff around your laboratory?) Dr. Macabre puts the good professor to work for him robbing banks. Since the crook only wanted cash, Catman and Kitten play out a hunch. They catch Professor Spellman in the act of robbing Emil Kraus, a wealthy old miser. During the ensuing struggle Catman gets shot (it is only a flesh wound) while the Professor makes good his escape. Before fleeing the scene Professor Spellman drops a hypodermic... not a normal hypodermic mind you, but a special kind that can be traced back to its buyer. Unbeknownst to our heroes, Dr. Macabre is anticipating their arrival and Kitten is caught by surprise ... and injected with the hypnotic serum! She and the Professor are now both under Dr. Macabre's control. As Kitten finishes binding Catman, Dr. Macabre prepares another hypodermic. Just as he is about to inject Catman, he bursts free of his ropes and turns the tables on Dr.



STUNNING BALANCE and figure placement make the cover of *Catman* #29 one of L.B. Cole's finest.

Macabre by injecting him with the hypnotic serum. He commands Dr. Macabre to return Professor Spellman and Kitten to normalcy. No one notices Professor Spellman with the gun until it is too late... he drills a few slugs into Dr. Macabre before turning the gun on himself. It really looks like the end for Dr. Macabre this time!

The Bedeviled Jonas Pearls

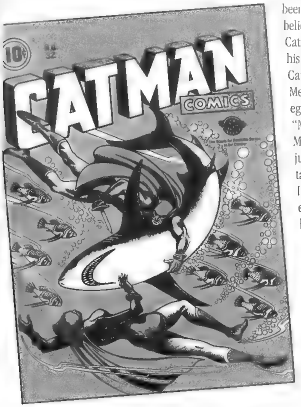
Catman #32 (August 1946), is the last issue for one of Continental Comics flagship titles. As with most of Continental's later covers, the subject matter rarely had anything to do with the contents of the feature story.

Highly collectible and scarce, *Catman* #32 (Aug 1946), with its famous underwater cover, features a classic duel between feline and fish. Note that instead of using a "blank" background, Cole added details like a school of tropical fish, water currents, and a myriad of bubbles to add a sense of realism to the aquatic battle. This was the last issue of the title.

This time was different. We are witness to a vintage L.B. Cole cover with Catman about to plunge a knife into a sinister shark with its sights set for Kitten. A scene taken directly from the main feature with artwork handled by none other than the master himself L.B. Cole and the lettering by his wife and partner Ellen Cole in a story titled "The Jonas Pearls".

It begins as we find a mortally wounded Dr. Macabre in the prison hospital asking to see his adopted daughter Lenore. It's a dying man's last wish. Meanwhile, Catman and Kitten have come to the prison hospital to verify for themselves the last hours of their evil nemesis Dr. Macabre!

Passing by one of the cells the crimefighters are summoned by Dr. Jonas, a famous fisheries expert who has spent the last fifteen years developing a secret process for producing pearls. The Jonas Pearls, the most beautiful and perfect specimens ever seen . and each one "bedeviled by the clammy touch of death!" Mr. Jonas has been imprisoned because he is believed to be a fraud. He asks Catman to protect his interests at his experimental station in Baja Catman suggests David Merryweather, his real life alter ego, as trustee to the pearl beds. "Meanwhile, back in Dr. Macabre's room" Lenore has just arrived with a satchel containing clothes and makeup Dr. Macabre fools his care takers into thinking he was dying by controlling his bleeding through auto-hypnosis. A short time later Dr. Macabre is in the hospital hallway subduing an innocent visitor to take his place. A little makeup for his victim, a gun shot wound similar to his own, and down the fire escape to freedom. No one is the wiser to Dr. Macabre's escape, but on his way down something draws his attention, it is the Jonas Pearl that Catman is examining. Dr. Macabre listens in on their conversation. He must have those pearls for himself.



Once on the train through the desert Dr. Macabre again realizes an opportunity presenting itself. Captain Merryweather and Katie are on the observation deck enjoying the moonlit night when Dr. Macabre deftly sneaks up from behind and pushes them both over the railing. They fall safely into the soft drifting desert sands. At the experimental station Dr. Macabre assumes the identity of the trustee, Captain David Merryweather. Gaining the trust of the superintendent and his staff, he soon "eliminates" them.

Meanwhile, Drake D'Arcy and his gang (remember them from Catman #28?) are on their way to Baja to meet Dr. Macabre. D'Arcy and his gang arrive just in time to help Dr. Macabre throw Catman and Kitten into the shark infested waters above the pearl beds. Slipping the ropes from their supple bodies, Catman and Kitten have no choice but to escape a flurry of gunfire by diving into the waters below. An unsavory choice for our feline heroes, usually its the cat eyeing the fish and not the other way around They come face to face with the hungry sharks below, while above Dr Macabre and the D'Arsay gang submerse themselves in the diving bell to watch the finish of Catman and Kitten. Catman seems to be getting the better of the sharks, but luckily for Dr. Macabre the diving bell is equipped with a submarine gun!? (Oyster shooters??)

Suddenly Kitten is gripped by the tentacle of a deadly giant squid. Catman swims to her aid and frees her with a few swift cuts of his knife. The giant squid slithers back into the darkness but not before leaving a black ink cloud behind obliterating the view from the diving bell. Catman takes this opportunity to smash the window on the diving bell with a rock, flooding it with water and drowning its inhabitants. Were they all drowned, or did the wily Dr. Macabre manage to escape this watery grave? Since it was the last issue, readers never found out.

Into Storage

Shortly after the war was over Continental Comics began closing down due to a decreased volume in sales. As a result, Catman and Kitten were thrown into storage along with *Suspense*, *Terrific*, and *Captain Aero* amongst others. The storage bin has been misplaced but not forgotten. Remember, a Cat Man has nine lives as bestowed upon him by the mystical guardian tigress.

People are often remembered and measured by their accomplishments and the lives that they have touched. L. B. Cole will be remembered fondly and often, for he leaves behind a legacy of comic covers that few others could only dream of He will also be remembered for his kind and heart felt genuine compassion towards others. We will miss him. ■

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THE MYSTERY MEN FROM FOX!

BLUE BEETLE, GREEN MASK, AND REX DEXTER HEADLINED ONE OF THE GREAT GOLDEN AGE ANTHOLOGIES.

BY STEVE CAREY

When Fox Features Syndicate launched the first issue of *Mystery Men Comics* (cover dated August 1939), one has to wonder if the editors realized just what they were getting into. With reprint or partial black-and-white comics still being issued at that time, *Mystery Men* #1 was an all color magazine featuring new characters. It also sported a bondage cover by the great Lou Fine, which certainly didn't hurt sales. Besides starting one of the mainstay titles for the Fox line, *Mystery Men* #1 is also recognized by astute collectors as a key book from a purely historical standpoint. Try to think of any other comic that gave birth to three features (The Blue Beetle, The Green Mask, and Rex Dexter of Mars) each of whom went on to get their own title, and you'll understand what I'm talking about. Also worth mention is the great artwork by other acknowledged drawing talents like George Tuska (on Zanzibar the Magician) and Bob Powell (on D-13 Secret Agent). In fact, the whole *Mystery Men* run turns out to be an incredibly important, interesting, and usually overlooked Golden Age milestone. Starting with number one, let's take a sampling of the first handful of issues of this amazing and historic run.

Mystery Men #1

The Green Mask by Walter Frehm (later changed to the more politically correct 'Frame') was the leadoff (and cover) feature for the first issue, though he really was not a unique creation. Billed as a 'modern Robin Hood', he wore tights, a cape, and—you guessed it—a green mask.

In his first adventure, he confronted and broke up a vicious insurance racket. When queried by a cop regarding his identity, the Green Mask gallantly leapt out a window while replying that his name must be kept a secret until he can rid society of crime. For a hero, the Green Mask did not have any superpowers per se, but he did have a lot of guts. Frehm's artwork on the strip is barely average, but it does flow well for an action/adventure.

The next feature is Dick Briefer's Rex Dexter of Mars. A spaceship from the 1939 World's Fair is launched to Mars, but not heard from again. Rex was the first human born on the strange red planet, and it wasn't until the year 2000 that the craft was repaired to fly again. Returning to Earth as a hero, Rex hooks up with a beautiful girl named Cynde. Things look good until a madman steers a small planet into a collision course with "wiping out the Americas" his ultimate goal. Rex and a friend intervene, and (naturally), our world is saved. Briefer's draftsmanship is different, but it works well the strip's sci-fi theme.

Chen Chang Master Mind

After a two page humor filler, Cecelia Munson's "Chen Chang Master Mind" serial begins. A fiend who seeks to wreak havoc on the white race, Chang is an oriental menace of the first degree... and his nemesis is detective Richard Kendall. After blowing up a bridge and trying to kidnap Kendall, Chang is finally defeated by the valiant detective while aboard an exploding train. The art is decent on this strip, as well.

Next up is Wing Turner Air Detective, a three page uncredited air adventure. Turner is downed while carrying a shipment of gold, but he punches his way to freedom and captures a mob. Mundane artwork and a short plot help reduce this effort to near-filler status. Thankfully, George Tuska's work enlivens the next feature, "Zanzibar the Magician." Possessed with a mysterious glare, Zanzibar tricks a mob into killing their own boss before marching the hypnotized and gleeful gang off to jail. Zanzibar was typical of the other similar magicians that were popular during the day, and only Tuska's participation has saved this strip from obscurity.

His Horse 'Flash'

A four page humor filler was followed by the obligatory two page text piece, this time signed by the ubiquitous William E. Eisner. Arthur Peddy's western feature, the Waco Kid, came up next in line. Galloping about on his horse 'Flash', the Kid, shatters a gang who has been looting a peaceful town. The drawings for this

10¢
No.1
MYSTERY MEN COMICS
Every Issue
REX DEXTER of MARS
THE BLUE BEETLE
64 Pages
In Full Color
A Strange Figure Suddenly Appeared — A Shot Rang Out — And the Fiend Was Stopped in His Tracks.

Mystery Men #1 (Aug 1939) features a Green Mask cover by the great Lou Fine. Its "mad doctor" theme is reminiscent of the film "Son Of Frankenstein" released the same year. This is the "Denver" copy.

feature are clean, but it still remains your typical western short. Inspector Bancroft of Scotland Yard appears next, and despite its exotic name, this uncredited effort is a routine sleuthing strip. In his first try, Bancroft defeats a former government official who tries to blow up Parliament. Mediocre artwork does not separate Bancroft from the common crowd.

PAGE 16
MYSTERY MEN COMICS
INSIDE THE HUGE SHIP, REX AND CYNDE FIND....
WELCOME TO THE CIRCLE OF FLAME-MEN!
WE ARE FROM THE PLANET EMALF. WE CONTROL THE FLAMES ON THE COMET YOU HAVE SEEN SOON WE WILL DESTROY THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE!
ONLY ONE CHANCE FOR US, CYNDE! FREEZE RAYS!
REX SLIPS A FREEZE-RAY GUN FROM ITS HOLSTER
5

DICK BRITTON'S bizarre flame creatures menace Rex Dexter in *Mystery Men* #10 (May 1940).

GREEN MASK leaps into action to foil a native sacrifice on the Lou Fine drawn cover of *Mystery Men* #4 (Nov1939). Shown here is the Allentown copy.

Intro Blue Beetle

Despite getting minor cover billing, the Blue Beetle only appears as a four page adventure. Police officer Dan Garret is wounded by gunmen from the 'White Fence' gang, so he temporarily gives up his uniformed 'blue suit' for a regular business blue suit and a pair of goggles. After saving a girl from being tortured, he uses a special gas capsule to apprehend the thugs. Returning to duty the next day, Dan chuckles as another officer describes the near-capture of the Beetle. This inside humor would be a common theme throughout the Beetle's early stories. Credited to Charles Nicholas, the art on the Blue Beetle is typical of an Eisner shop effort. D-13 Secret Agent follows, ably drawn by S. R. (Bob) Powell. Richard Anthony uses his James Bond-ish physical abilities to tackle a group of men bent on naval espionage. After capturing the group, the agent patriotically informs the bad guys that America always holds the upper hand. The shackled crooks were in no position to argue this truism.

A three page Captain Denny Scott of the Bengal Lancers story appears next. A quick and enjoyable strip, the able Brit officer conquers marauding bandits by starting a landslide on their camp. The uncredited art fits well within the brief story.

Finally Lt. Drake of the Naval Intelligence rounds out the first issue. F Klaus (Nordling) handles the feature, which is OK to read , but the squarish drawings usually aren't very appealing. After recovering some suspicious photographs, Drake is confronted and slightly wounded, but he manages to capture the foreign agents, thus saving New York Harbor from being hindered.

The old "shotgun" anthology

With such a "motley" line-up (hero, western, oriental menace, secret agent, humor, etc.), Fox obviously thought that the old "shotgun" anthology approach would entice more *Mystery Men* readers. They were even "concerned" enough to devote the inside front cover of the first issue to a house ad soliciting reader views with a survey.

A whole buck (hey, that was worth ten comics back then) was offered to the ten best letter writers who described their favorite strips.

We'd have to assume the Blue Beetle proved popular in the initial feedback, considering that he quickly got his own magazine (Winter, 1939/40), following some character named Superman by only a few months.

Fox Heroes

Blue Beetle #1 featured a new 13 page (origin) lead story, followed by reprints of his initial appearance in *Mystery Men*. Four enjoyable Eisner, Yarko the Great, reprints finish out *Blue Beetle* #1, which incidentally has a simple (but sharp) Lou Fine cover. An important book, *Blue Beetle* #1 is one of my favorite Golden Age comics. The title lasted over 8 years, and the character himself has been reincarnated on several occasions.

Later in 1940, the Green Mask obtained his own book, which mostly reprinted his earlier *Mystery Men* appearances. *Green Mask* suffered sporadic publishing, and died out near the end of 1946. Rex Dexter warranted an interesting one-shot bearing his name, also in 1940, but that was the only solo issue he could muster.

Mystery Men #2

A colorful and exciting Rex Dexter cover by Fine starts off the second issue of *Mystery Men*. The same features continue and the Blue Beetle dons a two-piece outfit with gloves, while going without the goggles we first saw him wear. The lead-off Green Mask story is a good one as our hero pretends to join a gang headed by an oriental arch criminal.

Mystery Men #3

A sweeping Green Mask cover by Fine is a true classic for issue number three. The Blue Beetle adds a belt to his outfit, and now has small black coverings over his eyes, which is a good move since he forgot any attempt to cover his face during his last escapade.

Zanzibar now unfortunately gets bumped to the back of the book. The ten $1 winners of the first issue's reader's survey are announced, but the coy editors don't bother to tell us what features came out winners!

Mystery Men #4

The fourth issue replaced the Waco Kid (who must not have done well in the survey) with Captain Savage Sea Rover, also credited to Arthur Peddy. In his initial offering, the good captain takes out a group of modern day pirates. An underrated Fine cover (Green Mask) is present, also. Seeking more reader input, the publisher again offers cash prizes for the best submitted letters on who is tops in the book.

Mystery Men #5

Yet another well done Lou Fine Green Mask cover begins the fifth issue. The same features march on, and the editors solicit more feedback.

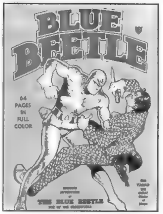
Mystery Men #8

The Blue Beetle is the lead story, getting a now semi-impressive eight pages to tell his tale . and The Green Mask is placed in the middle of the book. More reader contest winners are listed, but again we are not privy to which characters they voted for. A captivating Fine Blue Beetle cover really makes this book special.

Mystery Men #10

A terrific comic which starts off with a Blue Beetle cover by Joe Simon and a Wing Turner story by the master, Jack Kirby. The Rex Dexter yarn depicts our hero saving Mars from a group of renegade flame-men and the strange flying avenger known as "the Moth" continues in this issue, the feature beginning in #9.

Lacking attractive interior and exterior artwork, the mid-run-to-later issues of *Mystery Men* became lost in "hack oblivion." The title ended with what many collectors feel was a well-deserved death... with #31 (February 1942) the final issue of this landmark title.



Early Gems

Without question, Lou Fine's beautiful cover renderings for the early issues contribute heavily to today's collector interest in the *Mystery Men* run... and when found, these issues easily sell at above (or multiples of) *Guide* listings. 'Colorful' characters like the Green Mask and the Blue Beetle, supported by talents like Dick Briefer, George Tuska, and Bob Powell, further enhance the nostalgic appeal of *Mystery Men*. It's finally time for these early Golden Age gems to cast-off the cloak of 'mystery' that surrounds them, as more and more collectors rightfully place them in the forefront of the Golden Age comic book parade. ■

BLUE BEETLE #1 (Win 1939) The Blue Beetle "shoulda' been a contender..."

MYSTERY MEN #1 (Sep 1939, Larson copy) with its dynamic Rex Dexter cover by Lou Fine.

THE MATT SCHIFFMAN REPORT

Diversity Is Driving The Market

The New Year certainly didn't wait around for the market to slowly warm up toward the spring convention season. Record prices, quite a few dealer catalogs, and multiple auctions have all inundated us with great books to choose from. While the market's focus still remains on the more scarce "larger" key books, a new "underground" of collectors is growing… they are searching for (and finding) many previously unheralded keys and early number ones.

While the majority of these books are still priced under $500, their scarcity, and the ever growing demand has begun to cause premiums above Guide to asked for… and paid! Still, the allure of the little-known is bringing more and more attention to these gems. This pursuit is not limited to '30's and '40's material, but spills well into the '50's titles as well. When 4X - 7X Guide becomes the norm on these books (most Guide under $50), it seems very clear that an exciting trend is underway.

The recent reevaluation of Silver Age books (up with 1956-65, and down with 1966-69) has brought a whole new group of collectors to this area, and this renewed interest is (once again) pushing prices upward.

Golden Age

Fiction House is the brand recommended by five out of six collectors to alleviate the "multiple" Timely blues. Although Timely and DC are still leading the way in collector interest, many are looking toward other publishers. Interest in Planet Comics has always been strong, but Fight and Wings follow closely behind. Jungle, Jumbo, and Rangers plus a few other minor and smaller-in-scope titles are gaining interest too. Black Terror appearances are also becoming very sought after, as well as any Schomburg Airbrush covers.

Confirmed Sales: Cow Girl Romances #10 VF+ $200; Jungle Comics #137 NM- $175; Nellie the Nurse #1 FN+ $245; Ace Comics #65 NM $155; Funny Pages V3 #7 FN $465; King Comics #31 VF- $160; Mystery Comics #1 FN++ $395; Rocket Comics #3 VF+ $600; Silver Streak #6 GD+ $1,200; Sub Mariner #6 FN $720; Feature Comics #92 FN+ $215; Miracle Comics #1 VG- $250; America's Best #9 VF+ $280,

Comic published from 1946-53

If one could find a problem with the 50's books is that it is very difficult to chase anything that has received even the slightest attention from the comic press, collectors or dealers. A majority of the dealers and collectors have found that to date, it is much easier to find a Golden Age Timely, Fawcett, or DC book than to locate a Fox romance or a particular pre-code crime or horror book. Prices are escalating, but the same mentality reigns here as it does with the '70s collectors - it is just fun to be in on the ground floor of something relatively inexpensive, new, and challenging

Confirmed Sales. Justice #40 FN $36; Murderous Gangsters #4 VF/NM $165; Sweet Sixteen #2 VF $60, Abbot and Costello #1 VF $230; Mysterious Adventures #9 VG+ $55; Romantic Love #6 FN $60; Strange Worlds #4 VF+ $320; Swift Arrow #1 VF/NM $110; Features Stories Magazine #3 FN+ $90; The Killers #1 VG $135; Menace #7 NM $145; My Expenence #20 VG $40, Phantom Lady #13 VG/FN $985,

Silver Age

Once again, the passion has been reinjected into the Silver Age, and prices that are being realized are signaling that Silver is back to stay. The BIG NEWS is that the White Mountain copy of Amazing Fantasy #15 was sold by Metropolis Comics for $47,000!

It should also be noted that unless an issue is a particular key, or a bargain reading copy, most of the outstanding sales have occurred in the higher grade books. As we *continued on page 65*

GREG WHITE

Comic Books & Collectibles
KISSIMMEE, FLORIDA

Hello from sunny and warm Florida! Holiday sales were brisk and we are starting the new year in good fashion. Store sales have been better than average on both new product and back issues. We experienced an increase in tourists visiting our store during Christmas and hope it continues thru the new year. The exciting news this winter is that Frank Frazetta will be attending the three day Mega-Con in Orlando on March 8-9-10th, I have been told by the promoter that Frank and Ellie will be setting up a display of his oil paintings and possibly doing a question and answer panel. To anyone over the age of thirty-five, this has got to be the show of the year! Hope all of you can make it!

Silver Age (1955-1969)

We bought a large group of primarily non-super hero comics (horror, crime, etc.) that dated late 40's to early 60's. A terrific bunch in better than average condition! Most have already found a home and those that remain will be in our store stock. Marvels continue to sell at a steady pace. High grade DC's and photo cover Dell and Gold Key also sell well.

Recent Silver Age sales: Metal Men #9 NM $50; Tales of Suspense #59 VF $150; Frankenstein Comics #8 VF $195; Shock SuspenStories #1 VF $400; Four Color #378 FN $50; Amazing Spider-Man #14 VG $250; Batman #155 VG $48; Green Hornet #1 VF $95.

Golden Age (1935-1955)

Interest continues for *continued on page 66*

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JOHN CHRUSCINSKI & BRUCE ELLSWORTH • TROPIC COMICS

PLANTATION, FLORIDA

Hello again from the surfin' capital of the South. We just got through with our after Christmas 50% off sale. Early Marvels & DC's sold, BUT we were surprised to see 70's and 80's books that were suppose to be dead move out in large quantities. It does appear that in our area we have a reading population of collectors who will spend their money on cheap reading material!

We think that the entire industry is headed this way as far as more people READING what they buy! In other words... people are not "investing/speculating" in comics as much anymore but buying what they love to read!! Wouldn't that be great?!?!

Our big phone auction will take place this Saturday January 20th and we will let you know the results in our next market report.

DAVID CUMMINGS • MONKEY HOUSE COMICS

PEABODY, MASSACHUSETTS

Monkey House Comics is a mail order and occasional convention dealer specializing almost exclusively in 1948- 1962 comics in the $10-$100 range. We deal mostly in Pre-Code Horror, Sci-Fi, Crime, Good Girl, and other odd stuff.

Some recent sales include: Adventures into Weird Worlds #7 VG/VG+ $32, #8 VG $32, #15 VG/FN $34, #20 VG/FN $37; Black Cat Mystery 30 VF/NM $125, $32 NM $165; Crime SuspenStories #20 VG $75; Ghost #11 VF $125; Marvel Tales #110 VF $155, #118 FN/VF $125; Mister Mystery #12 GD $125, #17 PR/FR $19; The Thing 11 VG $68, #17 VG- $75; This Magazine is Haunted! #1 VG $68, #5 VG $65, #7 FR/GD $17, #10 VG- $85; Tomb of Terror #16 VF/NM $165; Worlds of Fear #6 VG+ $55; All-Winners #13 GD $115; Sub-Mariner #34 VG/VG+ $175; World of Fantasy #15 NM $150; Young Men #24 GD $115; Avengers 1 PR/FR $55, Captain Science 4 VG/FN $175; Crown Comics #1 FR $20; Doll Man #15 VG $55, #38 VG $45; Green Hornet #2 GD/VG $145; Green Lama #5 GD/VG $85; Kerry Drake #5 GD/VG $24; Strange Adventures #1 VG/VG- $375; War Fury 2 VG+ $15.

Recent acquisitions include: Millie the Model 1 VG+; Strange Stories from Another World #4 VF; Black Terror #20 VG-, #21 VG, #22 VG-; America's Best #24 FN-; Crime Reporter #1 GD/VG.

It has been my experience that collectors looking for these types of books seem more "educated" than ever before... especially with access to publications like the Gerber Photo Journal, the Overstreet Price Guide, The Overstreet/Carter Grading Guide, and of course, Comic Book Marketplace. These collecting and educational tools bring the full range of truly collectible comic books out into the open and accessible to anyone that may be interested. My feeling is that an educated customer is a good customer.

BRUCE EDWARDS
QUASAR COMICS
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

Hello to everyone throughout! We've just finished our big move into a new (old) house and simultaneously completed our 20th phone auction. Talk about a glutton for punishment! I am pleased to announce that of the 1309 lots that were available, 1200 of them (91.6%) were sold!

Sales: Daredevil #1 (coverless) VG $18, #2 VG+ $62, #9 FN/VF $18, #158 FN $11. Defenders #1 & #2 GD/VG $3, Fantastic Four 48 GD/VG $53; Amazing Spider Man #40 VF/NM $135, #50 FN/VF $120, #50 VG $45, #50 GD $22, #100 VG $15, #101 VG $45, Avengers #3 VG $57, Captain Marvel (Marvel) #1 VG $10, Iron Man/Sub Mariner VG/FN $50, Iron Man #1 VF $180,

Jungle Action #5 VG $17; Kid Colt #9 GD+ $15, #31 VG $13, #45 VG $12; Marvel Tales #96 VF $215, Marvel Super Heroes #12 & #13 VG/FN $55 for the pair; Punisher 1-10 FN/VF $10.

Silver Surfer 1 VG $81, Strange Tales #102 GD $15, #103 VG $32, #104 FN+ $40, #111 FR/GD $10, Sub Mariner 1 (SA) FN $37; Tales of Suspense and Tales to Astonish #18 PR/FR $17 for the pair;

Tales of Suspense #37 GD+ $15, Tales to Astonish #36 VG- $40; X-Men #1 (coverless) $27, #1 GD/VG (logo box cut out of cover) $177, #35 VF $53.

Adventures of Bob Hope #5 VG (with stains) $24; All American Men of War #12 GD/VG $27; Atom #1 FR/GD $39; Batman #11 FR $200, #21 FR $52, #126 VF $79, #128 VF/NM $145, #132 NM $70, #138 NM $81, #139 VF/NM $80, #140 NM $57, #141 NM $115, #142 NM $90, #148 NM $13, #171 FN $91, #200 VF/NM $115, #200 VG $14, #366 (Jason Todd remember him?) NM $1,

Boy Commandos #8 FR/GD $50; Brave and Bold #29 FR $50; Camelot 3000 issues #1-12 all for $1, Crisis on Infinite Earth #1 (25 copies) NM $4; Challengers #10 VG/FN $36, #20 VG+ $18; Detective #294 VG $11, #298 GD $14, Flash #111 GD $22, #117 GD+ $22, Flash Annual #1 FR $9, JLA #3 GD $31, #7 FR $5, #46 VG/FN $20; Kamandi #1 FN/VF $5; Metal Men #1 FR $22;

My Greatest Adventures #82, #83, #84 VG $15 each. Mystery in Space #4 VG $82; #17 have seen in the Overstreet Guide, mid grade books are still adjusting themselves to market demand, and prices are slightly lower than "normal" FN ratios.

Of course, there are always exceptions and those apply to the "Big Five" DC war books All grades are selling extremely well and at well above Guide prices, and interest shows no sign of letting up

Confirmed Sales Spectre #1 NM $95, All American Men Of War #82 VF $60, Our Army At War #128 FN $105; JLA #55 NM $50, Green Lantern #59 VF $145, X Men #1 $520, X-Men #14 FN $75, Amazing Spider Man #17 VF+ $340, #23 FN $115, #50 FN+ $155, Journey into Mystery #73 VG $40, The Phantom #2 VF+ $35, Hawkman #1 GD $55, Hulk #6 FN+ $610; Adventure #253 FN $75; F-Troop #1 VF/NM$70, Magnus #1 VF++ $245, Star Trek #1 FN $175, Star Spangled War Stories #138 VF++ $105, House of Mystery #160 FN $45, House of Secrets #61 VF$130

1970s

I've received quite a bit of feedback from dealers that are trying to carry early '70's books for their customers, and their success stories are mixed. Many are finding it to be an entirely new niche that allows them to bolster sales that had not been there before. Yet a few are complaining that they are carrying the early '70's books, but just cannot find interested collectors in their area. Although the early '70's books are doing very well for dealers (overall), it is just like any other publishing period - not everything in a given group sells well

For example, not many Golden Age dealers are finding a huge demand for the Funny Animals books right now, so they tend to carry the mainstream superhero stuff and do very well. Also, since these books are relatively new, and collecting had a established "Guide" at the time of these books being published, grade is more important than ever with these books. Only a very few issues can carry collector interest into the lower grades at this time, but that collector perception is always changing

Confirmed Sales: Adventure #428 NM $40; Action #440 MT $18, Dead of Night #11 NM $14.50; Star Spangled War Stories #151 NM $90, #154 NM $50; X-Men #100 VF++ $48, Hulk #181 NM- $325; Rima #1 NM $12, House of Secrets #100 NM $12; DareDevil #105 NM $16, Amazing Spider-Man #109 NM $20, #120 NM $40, Amazing Adventures #11 NM $32, Jonah Hex #1 NM $55, JLA #94 NM $44, Batman #232 NM $75, Shazam #1 MT $8; Creatures On The Loose #10 NM $25; Conan #23 NM $40, Forever People #1 FN $25; House of Secrets #92 VF $275.

Driving The Market

Since diversity is once again driving the market, and all areas seem to be strong, it can only be great news for all of us. No longer are we seeing the mass exodus or infusion into small niche markets and the quick decimation of any long term collecting interest to that market The overall long term health of the hobby should be a concern for all of us, especially with the upheaval in the new comic market

Will the machinations of the new market have an impact on us? There are those that would argue that it doesn't, but most would agree that it does directly affect all of us no matter what we collect CBM would like to hear what you think, so write or Fax

Until next time, good luck and happy hunting ■

Collectors should note that the opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Comic book values and prices listed here are subject to the above conditions. Seasoned hobbiests are acutely aware that comic book and collectible prices and values vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors

GREG WHITE CONTINUED

key issues and unrestored high grade. Most other Golden Age books appear to be somewhat slow even when priced a bit below Overstreet. I believe the so called "Golden Age Rage" is more hyperbole than fact, at least here. Once you get beyond those few "key" books, sales are sluggish… this is the case with mail order, convention, and store sales. We'll see what 1996 brings.

Recent Golden Age sales: Superman #2 VG $1500; All-American 25 FN $2500; USA #8 GD $200.

Original Art & Toys

We recently picked up an original art page from one of the 1960's Superman-Flash races! What a great piece! Also bought a nice group of 1940's Mickey Mouse Animation drawings. TV related toys from the 50's and 60's continue to be in demand as are all comic related toys and premiums.

Original Art & Toys Sales: Flintstone Hanna-Barbera cel $60; Corgi Batmobile (loose) $95; Mickey Mouse animation drawing $95.

BRUCE EDWARDS CONTINUED

FR/GD $20, #88 GD $10; Our Army at War #40 FN- $28; Superman #33 PR $27, #39 FR $43, #55 GD $49, #112 VG $34, #199 GD/VG $23; Superman's Girl Friend, Lois Lane #18 VG $30; World's Finest #85 (double cover) VG $46.

Auction Overview

Results of the auction: new comics from the mid-70's to date (with the few exceptions such as Shi, Lady Death and Vampirella… get the trend here?) were totally DEAD. Silver Age Marvel and DC mainstream superhero (with the exception of Batman) in Fine or less condition was met with so-so enthusiasm. Esoteric 60's and any 50's in all grades did from decent to excellent. Strangely enough, the low grade did better than the high grade. Early Spidey's from #3 up realized 60% of Guide in all grades.

ROB HUGHES • ARCHANGELS • MANHATTAN BEACH, CALIFORNIA

The market continues to remain strong. The Overstreet Golden Age Price Update reaffirms investment time and time again… with increasing back issue sales complemented by record prices. Golden Age comics continue to be king of the mountain with Silver Age making a fervent comeback. DC's have begun to regain the spotlight from Timely's with Superman is at the forefront.

Sales Action Comics #10 GD $1,000, #15 FN/VF light rest $1,700, #17 FN/VF light rest $1,600, #29 FN+ $800 (Cosmic Aeroplane), #52 VF- $800, Superman #16 NM+ $2,000, #17 VF+ $1,500, #90 NM+ $2,000, #94 VF+ $2,500 (Crescent City), #34 VF/NM $980. The 1942 book "Adventures of Superman" $1,350; Adventure Comics #37 VG+ $500, #67 FR $150, #73 VF/NM $11,500, #73 VF/NM (moderate rest) $6,000.

The Caped Crusader remains in demand… Batman #2 GD $900, #3 VF/NM light rest $5,000, #9 GD+ $300, #12 FN+ $650, #15 GD $250, #19 VF+ $1,500, #92 VG/FN $200,

Detective Comics fare even better, #5 FR $500, #29 FN rest $3,750, #30 GD+ $950, #31 VG+ rest. $2,000, #32 VG+ light rest $2,000, #32 VF+ rest $3,000, #33 FN/VF light rest. $11,500, #36 FN rest $800, #37 VG/FN $1,900, #42 VG/FN $500, #51 VG/FN $500.

The Emerald Avenger also shines bright … All American Comics #25 FN/VF $4,500, Green Lantern #1 FN+ rest. $3,200; Nedors Black Terror moves well even with the large price increases; Black Terror #1 FN+ $1,200, Exciting Comics #9 FN+ $3,000

A beautiful copy of Blue Bolt #1 in VF sold at $2,250 A pair of scarce Danger Trails found homes #2 VG/FN $350, #5 FN+ $400 A rare copy of Four Color #4 in VG+ was purchased at $2,800 Flash Comics #7 in VG+ sped into a collectors hands for $800 The San Francisco copy of More Fun #84 NM sold quickly at $3,000. Wonder Woman holds her own in Sensation Comics #45 NM $450, #68 VF+ $350

Timely Comics are not far behind All Winners #21 VG/FN $1,650 The Blonde Bombshell is very enticing to collectors, All Select #11 VF $900, Blonde Phantom #12 VF $900. The five- star general is Ole Wing-Head himself, Captain America Comics #1 VF+ $35,000, #2 VF $8,000, #6 NM $6,750, #7 VF/NM $6,000 (Chicago copy), #78 FN $650 Marvel Mystery #4 GD/VG $450, #10 VG+ $650, #12 VF+ rest $1,200, #20 VF+ cleaned $950; Sub-Mariner Comics #11 VF+ $1,000, #33 VG+ $250, #35 VG+ $200, #38 VG/FN $200. Fawcett's continue to have a loyal following Captain Marvel Jr #1 NM $4,000, Master Comics #46 VF/NM $400,, Nickel Comics #8 FN+ $350,

A few other sales include Punch Comics #18 FN $1500, Startling Comics #49 VF $1,600, Suspense Comics #7 FN+ $900, #7 VG $350, #12 VG+ $250. Phantom Lady #17 FN $1,700, Seven Seas #1 VG+ $1500, #2 VF $300, #3 FN $150, #5 VG- $100, #6 VG+ $100. EC comics do quite well, Haunt of Fear #4 FN- $225, Tales from the Crypt #300 FN $125, Vault of Horror #21 (Gaines file) MT $800, Weird Science Fantasy #27 (Gaines) MT $800, #27 NM $400; War Against Crime #1 (Gaines) MT $3,000

As mentioned before, Silver Age comics are making a quick and strong comeback here. Marvels lead the way with Amazing Fantasy #15 GD $1,200, #15 VG $2,000, Amazing Spider-Man #1 VG+ $1,600; Avengers #1 FN+ $1,300, #4 VG+ $275; Daredevil #1 NM- $2,000; Fantastic Four #1 VG/FN $2,500, #5 FR $100, #8 VF/NM $6500 Journey into Mystery #83 VG/FN $1,200.

The Kirby monster great Fin Fang Foom increases in popularity daily as demonstrated by numerous sales of his 1st appearance. Strange Tales #89 GD+ $150, #89 GD/VG $200, #89 VG $250, #89 VF $600, #89 VF $1,100. Iron Man does well in Tales of Suspense #39 FN $1,200, #40 NM $2,500, #50 NM- $1500, #68 NM+ $700, #84 NM $50

And last we come to the 70's comics. A nice run of Vampirella's #1-#78 sold at $900 House of Secrets #92 VF/NM $450, Swamp Thing #1 NM $90. There is also a good demand for the Neal Adams Green Lantern issues #76-#89

As we enter the New Year, the convention season is just around the corner Best of fortunes in searching for those elusive issues Until next time

TIM COLLINS • RTS UNLIMITED, INC. • GOLDEN • COLORADO

The bad news. The new comic industry is going through some tough times. All the retailers I talked to in December said new product sales were down. If this trend continues, it doesn't bode well for the back issue industry. The worst part is that the slowest part of the year is just beginning. I wouldn't be surprised if more than a couple of stores left the business in the next few months.

The good news. The back issue market is booming! I think part of this is due to the dissatisfaction with much of the new-comics-as-collectible market. Current readers, I think, are generally frustrated with the new product and its ever-increasing cover prices. The bottom line is that one can find many great stories in the back issue bins for LESS than the cost of a new comic! I think collectors are finding more value in back issues. You can get a new comic with less pages and an often less-than-readable story… or you can spend a few dollars more and get an entertaining story for $5.00 or so from the Silver (or even the Golden Age!) Furthermore, collectors are realizing that for their "investment" dollars are better spent on the Silver and Golden Age books, where the supply is fixed. Seems to me the key for the future growth in our hobby is to attract and educate new collectors to this area. Any ideas? Please let me know.

Silver Age - Sales are going strong. Ten cent DCs are still the best sellers. At the last Great Eastern show in January, I blew out 99% of all my Wonder Woman back issues at double Guide! Issues between #110-#150 in the GD to VG range sold best. Early issues of X-Men seem to have found a renewed interest. A new collectible genre is emerging: Westerns. They're cheap, challenging to collect, and have great stories.

Golden Age - The Golden Age market is still very strong. Prices are trying to catch up to a rational level with respect to Silver Age books. All Nedor titles are hot (Black Terror, Exciting, Fighting Yank, Startling, Thrilling, and Wonder). All issues sell steadily at over-Guide. Many sell at two or more times Guide. The beautiful Schomburg "Xela" covers sell at three times Guide in all grades. My most notable sale was a heavily restored Four Color #9 App. VF for $4,500.00.

Count those pages - In the past two months I purchased comics with folios missing. In one case, a Popular Comics #28 had 14 folios. Since this book contains mostly Sunday page reprints it wasn't apparent the two center folios were missing. How did I determine they were missing? I luckily had another copy.

In another case, the center-fold was in place, however, the book had 13 folios. After carefully looking through the book, I found where the folio was missing. (I fully believe that both dealers at the time of sale thought the books were complete.)

The moral is… count your pages as soon as you get your comics! I think this is especially important paramount at shows. Before you spend your hard earned bucks, make sure that book is complete! I count all folios in both directions to make sure nothing is missing.

Note. As mentioned in earlier reports, some books published during WWII may not have the same number of pages on each side of the center fold. Usually, the apparently missing pages look like they were cut out are towards the back of the book and you should see some of the folio neatly cut where the pages are missing.

Tim's tip of the month - Tape the flaps of your comic bags with Scotch's Magic tape. This tape is less sticky and thus much much easier to remove from your comic bag. Till next month: don't buy any swampland!

GREG PHARIS & DAVE GRISEZ • SAN DIEGO COMICS & COLLECTIBLES • SAN DIEGO, CA

While watching the national news coverage of the snow blizzards, floods, and tornadoes that are going on in the other parts of the country, one cannot help but sympathize with the plight of the victims of merciless Mother Nature. At the same time, it makes me wonder at the relative scarcity of valuable collections that are subject to these conditions. I know many whose collections were affected by the Northridge earthquake, and I wonder how many collectibles have been damaged or destroyed by the recent storms back East.

There has been an increase in collectors buying as many 10¢ cover price comics (and first year 12 centers) as they can… in ANY grade except Poor. I think that the recent rush to acquire these books confirms that collectors lack faith in the long term good health of comics that are being published today. I guess they feel if new comics are in jeopardy the value of the older books would likely skyrocket. We are still sorting this one out.

Recent notable sales include: Amazing Spider-Man #27 FN $75, #129 NM (Mile High II) $275, #238 NM $700, #239 NM $40, #100 VF- $120 (consignment), X-Men #5 FN $100, #6 VF- $135, #9 FN $72. Star Spangled War #113 FN $30, #116 FN $25; Sgt. Fury #2 VG $65 (consignment); Batman Dark Knight Returns #1-4 VF (set) $30; Exciting #61,#62, #63 FN all three for $300 (consignment); Rulah #17 VF- $235; Jo-Jo #8 FN $130 (both of the previous were consignments). Lots of low grade, mainly GD/VG DC's from 1965-1969 mixed titles at Guide or 10% less.

Acquisitions: Ten high grade Romance comics from the 50's and a gorgeous solid VF Journey into Mystery #89!

Other merchandise sales include several POTF Star Wars figures (loose). With so much new Star Wars merchandise flooding the marketplace the average consumer cannot keep up with the glut… the truly collectible toys suffer (you would think that we would learn from history?!). Also sold: a small collection of Japanese tin toys from the 40's-50's, and some miscellaneous Star Trek merchandise and the typical "Hot for Two Weeks Action Figures."

Star bright, Star light, the first star I see tonight… I wish they'd make an action figure of Phantom Lady… my favorite sight! One can dream… Happy Hunting! ■

— END MARKET REPORTS

Continued from page 13

art form. The historical articles manage to find that delicate balance wherein they give the hobby the respect it deserves while never taking themselves too seriously. This is accomplished both in the quality of the writing of the writing itself and in the variety and scope of the pieces. I especially enjoy the varied length of each one. These two to three page wonders fit beautifully with the more in-depth ones

The quality of your color reproductions is astounding. The cover gallery alone is worth the price of admission, while the overall lay out is clean, sharp, and aesthetically pleasing. This praise coming from a long time (twenty-five years) comic collector!

One mild suggestion. I would love to see a small "inset" in some of the articles, listing the Overstreet values of the comic or comics being examined. This way, when you get me all excited about a title such as Charleton's Nature Boy, I don't have to run off checking my guide to see if the books are within my range.

I particularly liked the article on Crom the Barbarian, and was thrilled to realize that I had all the featured issues in my collection! Kind of adds to the reward of the hobby. As for me, the vast majority of my books are worth less than fifty dollars. I rarely spend more than twenty on any back issue, yet have managed to amass a collection that give me great pleasure and satisfaction. This to me is truer to the spirit of the hobby than all the attention given to those ten thousand dollar purchases. Sincerely,

James Cassara, North Carolina

Lisa gets all the credit for the quality of the color repros in the Gallery. It takes an incredible amount of time, attention to detail, and computer know-how to get those color covers to come out right. In fact, the color section often takes more time to "fine tune" than the entire rest of the magazine! Like you, I also enjoyed the info on Crom the Barbarian… seems Pat Calhoun is always coming up with a unique perspective and great information. We often include the price insets you request when appropriate and space permits. As for the "true spirit of the hobby"… sounds to me as if you have embraced it

Canadian Query

Love CBM. In Calgary we began the Alberta Comic Collectors Association this year Many of our members (those interested in the Golden and Silver Age comics) are faithful readers of the publication

Now for a question When I was a kid in the 1940s (mid to late), I recall reading a story, it may have been a backup feature in a comic which told the story of Balder and Loki. You know the one I mean, where Balder is invincible except for mistletoe and dares all the warriors to hurl their weapons at him. He dies, of course, because of Loki's evil doing. The feature made an impression on me. Can anyone identify which comic this story appeared in?

Carl Horak, Alberta

Maybe some CBM reader knows and can help us both out.

Comic Quest

I'm trying to track down a comic book that my sister and I read as kids in the 1950s (possibly a Forbidden Worlds?). She read me a story about a vampire spider that was eventually killed by bird. I have a vivid memory of a giant black spider on the cover. I think I recall another story about a zombie (at least I think it was in the same issue). Can you help with this one? I'd be very grateful to anyone who could help identify this book. So far, nobody in my area has ever heard of this one. My thanks in advance for your help and keep up the great work with the only magazine I read regularly Yours Truly,

Nick (Nicky) Baum, Florida

Look no farther for your vampire spider and zombie stories! A quick scan of my ACGs reveal that they reside in a pre-code copy of Adventures Into The Unknown (#50) dated December 1953. Happy reading!

Hitler Covers

Every few years another article on Hitler covers is published, and we come closer to compiling a comprehensive list. West Stephan's checklist in CBM #31 brings us closer than ever to that goal.

Thrilling Comics #45 is the only cover that I can think of that's missing from the list. The cover is similar to More Fun #75 in that Hitler is seen only in what is either a photo or painting in the background of the action. The foreground shows the Commando Cubs taking control of radio Berlin with their fists.

I'll continue the hunt and let you know if I discover any others. Best Wishes,

Jeff Delaney, California

(*Continued on page 70*)

SUPERB QUALITY GOLDEN AGE

Air Fighters Comics
8 VF/NM Vol. 1 ..... $525
All Star Comics
11 VF/NM $2950
America's Greatest Comics
2 VF- $475
5 VG+ $140
Batman
7 VF- $2100
16 FN/VF $2750
25 FN/VF $800
Blackhawk
15 FN/VF $250
Captain Marvel Adv.
2 FN/VF $1750
3 VF $1475
Comic Cavalcade
31 NM $225
Daredevil Comics
2 VG- $485
3 NM+ File Copy $3250
Detective Comics
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153 FN+ $185
Fight Comics
Mile High Copies
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4 NM $1280
7 VF/NM $700
Flash
14 FN+ $675
Jo-Jo
#7 (8) FN $125
Marvel Mystery Comics
14 VF+ $1500
82 VF/NM "D" Coll. $1875
Master Comics
28 VF $550
78 NM $170
More Fun Comics
76 VF- $900
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21 NM $950
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29 NM $1170
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Example of Covers Available

I have been primarily a collector for many years, and I am now refocusing some of my collectible interests.

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Keep hunting, Jeff, keep hunting... thanks for the info!

Steranko & Adams

I wanted to (somewhat belatedly) commend you on October's Steranko issue! He is truly one of the absolute giants in terms of creativity and talent, if not output. He's also great to his fans: As a neophyte at the 1970 New York ComicCon, I entered his line of appreciative fans only to discover that I had nothing for him to autograph except a paper bag! Steranko took it in stride and good-naturedly honored my request. I've largely divested myself of most of my Marvel collection over the years, but I never considered selling Jim's work. I'm delighted to learn that he's about to re-enter the field.

Of course, the other talent who exploded during this time was Neal Adams. In actuality, Neal's style was perhaps more influential, as it became as highly imitated as the Image artists are today. I'd love to see an issue focused on Adams if possible. I'd like to know what he remembers about his DC Romance covers; some are clearly his work, whereas others look to be a collaboration with Jack Sparling. Also, while there is some general awareness that he produced some material with Sparling, what specific stories were involved?

I'm looking forward to your upcoming feature on Murphy Anderson, truly one of the Silver Age greats. Other DC stars due for further recognition include Carmine Infantino and Gil Kane. Anything on the horizon?

Tom Hamilton, Ohio

I'm happy to report those upcoming interviews are "on the horizon"... and I agree, Murphy Anderson, is one of the all-time greats! Regarding your Sparling question, perhaps some knowledgeable CBM reader can help.

Rushton Writes

Thanks for the "Author's Copy" of CBM #30 in which you printed my article on "Jerry Siegel's Spider" - it was a pleasant surprise. I just wish now that I had taken more time to proofread it properly as I seem to have inexplicably stated that the Mighty Comics Group were an offshoot of Harvey Publication rather than Archie. This error was made even more glaringly obvious by the proximity of Stephen H. Gentner's excellent article on the Fly - a hero that I have always been fond of, especially during the unfairly neglected Rosenberger period. I also agree with Mr. Gentner about the effectiveness of the green and yellow uniform to my mind Jim Steranko's 1983 cover illustrations belong among the classic icons of superhero art.

On the subject of the Spider, Steve Holland has since informed me that Fleetway Super Library, Fantastic Series #2 (January 1967) was also written by Siegel. This features "The

Professor of Power" - a Jekyll and Hyde type story in which a scientist's attempt to eliminate Evil, accidentally leads to him being transformed into a powerful and malevolent monster. After a series of battles, he is eventually outwitted by the Spider who traps him in a dimension inhabited solely by devils. The artwork for this tale was provided by Marcuzzi, a continental artist with a slick, 'square-jawed' style reminiscent of Dick Sprang.

Despite its digest-sized format and black and white art, this self-contained 120-page adventure was rather more like the standard American comic book than most British comics of the day. Altogether, the Spider starred in thirteen issues of the series (which changed from "Fantastic" to "Stupendous" with #3), alternating with another 'superhero' called "the Steel Claw", though none of the later stories were written by Siegel. Each issue featured beautifully painted covers by a variety of European artists.

If there are any Siegel completists out there who would like to acquire a copy of this item, the good news is that British comics tend to be very much cheaper than their American equivalents; the bad news is that they are generally much rarer and a lot harder to get hold of - in this respect collecting them is similar to the US market 20 to 25 years ago, when luck and perseverance were far more important than the size of your bank balance. Happy days! All the Best,

Philip L. Rushton, England

Archie Not Harvey

I have been enjoying CBM immensely. I grew up during the Silver Age and have many fond memories of reading and collecting comics during the Sixties. I enjoy both your Silver Age and Golden Age articles, especially when I can learn something new.

The recent article "Jerry Siegel's The Spider" by Phil Rushton (CBM #30) was one such article. I particularly enjoyed learning about the Society of Heroes since I have a soft spot in my heart for the Mighty Crusaders.

However, I believe that there is a point about the article that should be noted. Mr. Rushton wrote that Jerry Siegel was helping to "revive Harvey's moribund superhero line under the Mighty Comics imprint" (p. 62), and later mentions Harvey Comics again in the context of The Mighty Crusaders and Mighty Comics (p. 65). Mighty Comics including Jerry Siegel's work on the Fly and the Mighty Crusaders were actually part of Archie Comics. Mighty Comics represented Archie's attempts to revive the MLJ characters from the Golden Age. Two subsequent attempts to revive these characters include Archie's Red Circle line in the 1980s and Impact Comics (with DC) in the 1990s.

During the Silver Age Harvey Comics was also trying to cash in on the superhero boom around that time but helping them were such creators as Joe Simon and Jim Steranko. I am not aware of Jerry Siegel being involved with Harvey's efforts.

I also have a question for you and CBM readers. There have been some interesting discussion of when the Silver Age began (such as Michelle Nolan's column in CBM #27), but when did it end? Related to that is the question of what Age came after the Silver Age? I think that addressing these questions should lead to as much heated but enjoyable and informative debate as does the question of when did the Silver Age begin. Sincerely,

Dave Palmer, Illinois

(*continued on page 72*)

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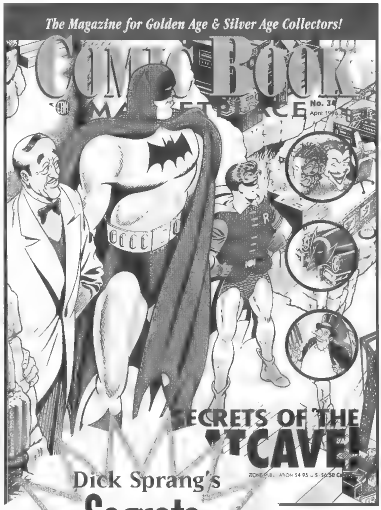

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The Archie/Harvey mix up is really our fault… it was actually discovered during the editing process and marked for correction. Because of an extremely tight time schedule, the correction was inadvertently overlooked, and for this we offer our apology to both Mr. Rushton and to CBM readers… we'll endeavor to do better in the future.

On the question "When did the Silver Age end?" I offer my view. I personally feel that it ended in 1969… the end of 12¢ comics, the end of the decade, and the end of a distinct historical period in comic production. Likewise, I mark the beginning of the Bronze Age in 1970 for similar reasons.

Identifying and demarcating "comic book ages" is a perilous task because (like grading) so much of the interpretation is based on individual esthetic variables that are tough to define. At any rate that's my "2¢ worth" on the topic. I look forward to the views of other CBM readers… just drop me a line or FAX and maybe your opinion will likely see print in an upcoming issue! I look forward to hearing from you.

George Tuska Writes

I received the magazines with our interview in it. John Coates did a fantastic job on putting it all together. It was great reading what the other artists contributed, especially Joe Simon's remarks. He exaggerated about the dog, but it was good reminiscing about it.

Thanks again. I know my kids will appreciate it as much as Dorothy and I. It makes me feel like getting back to work again. Regards,

George Tuska, New Jersey

Taxing (Whew) Tax

Enclosed you will find a check made out for the California state sales tax on my renewal subscription to the Comic Book Marketplace. When I sent my renewal in the sales tax was not listed on the advertisement so I assumed it was included in the subscription price.

Now that the holiday season is over I finally have the time to take care of this matter. As you can imagine, paying sales tax was not a top priority on my Christmas shopping list. As a result of this situation I am considering changing over to the Republican party as well as hanging a portrait of Newt Gingrich over my living room hearth. But it is a testament to how much I enjoy your magazine that I am willing to give the state $3.36 of my hard earned money to keep its employees' coffee pots full. Yours truly,

Bob Anderson, California

Since we received your letter, we amended our ads requesting all California residents to include the 7% sales tax with their subscription orders. Sorry for the inconvenience… I must tell you, however, that several of my friends who are state employees asked me to personally thank you for your contribution… seems their coffee pot actually were getting low… At ant rate, I want to, personally thank you for you loyalty to CBM , in spite of the tax!

The Family Of Collectors

Hi fandom members! I'm writing this letter because I need some help and I want to explain a few things. First of all, to those who know me either personally or from doing business, I trust we have developed a rapport that goes beyond comics. I've had so many interesting conversations with so many of you that the business dealings rate a far second in importance. From 1985 through 1993, we did okay at the store (Paper Moon) and at shows, and conventions. But sometime around 1994 I started to feel different. The old "pizzazz" wasn't there--I didn't feel the same - not just about comics and business, but about most everything. Then about a year ago, May 1995, I began to experience pains in my stomach and back. I went to doctor after doctor, spent eight days in a hospital and came away with a diagnosis of some minor "this and thats," i.e. a few gall stones, gastritis, kidney stones, hiatal hernia. "Take these prescriptions, get them filled, and all will be well" (I had no insurance and the prescriptions cost $400 which I was told to stop taking within a week). Incidentally, if you have a good, long-standing doctor, stay with him. Anyway I was bounced around to nine different doctors until in frustration they sent me to Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla, N.Y. The doctors there decided to do exploratory surgery, and upon doing so, discovered advanced pancreatic cancer. I knew when I got to this part of the letter, it would get tough for me to continue to

write because I've never had to ask for help from people, especially people I don't know that well. Incidentally, for those of you who have seen BD Cook ads in the CBG in the last year or so, I want you to know that not one of those books belong to me, they were con signed to me from a man and his wife from Albany, N.Y., After all is said and done, there is very little left for us.

The doctors told me I have six months to two years to live and prior to going to Westchester Hospital, I had no medical coverage (my wife put me on her coverage just before going there). But all the bills prior to that are ours. They amount to about $8,000 plus… and guys, -yes, I'm asking for some help, whether in money, moral support, or comics to sell. I couldn't even begin to tell you how relieved I would be to not to have to leave my wife burdened with this.

You know, I don't even know if I'm doing the right thing by writing this, but the truth is, I don't know anywhere else to turn. My blood relatives are all gone and you guys are the only "family" I know.

Okay, no more of that--I just want to say that comic books rejuvenated my life, gave it a new purpose (again), and I can't imagine where my head would be today without them. I don't know of anything else to say other than thanking you in advance for you help.

My radiation therapist is Dr. Thomas Eanelli, Horton Hospital, 60 Prospect Ave., Middletown, N.Y. 10940 (914) 342-7575; my oncologist is Dr Weckstien, Orange Oncology, P.C., 300 Crystal Run Rd., Middletown, N.Y. 10940 (914) 692-6999. If nothing else, just a note of support would be real welcomed, as I don't have a lot of people to talk to about this I don't know if I'm doing the right thing, but as my letter explains, I don't know who else to turn to. When I was diagnosed in October with cancer, my family and I were literally knocked to our knees.

Finally after some long talks with the "man upstairs." I felt a little better and wanted to try to live everyday as best I could .. it gets very hard. Any help we can get (if you can allow my letter to be published) will be documented as a paid bill for anyone to see at anytime.

Don Cook, New York
Box 385, Mountaindale, New York 12763
(914) 434-2502

Your plea touched our hearts… Lisa and I are forwarding some odds and ends straight away. The family" of collectors that I know are amazingly generous people… take some comfort and hope from that. You're in out thoughts. Don

50 øre

In your last issue, you ask about "pedigree copies" As I have never seen, nor owned, a pedigree comic book, I don't know if they are "worth it" But the term seems a bit overused I imagine it's as good a way of "hiking" up the price. On the other hand, if someone is willing to pay that price... The value of an old comic book is, as we all know, in the "mind" of the beholder. If knowing who originally bought the thing, how he/she kept it, etc. gives you a thrill, then you might desire it more and thus be willing to pay more. The fact that the condition of a pedigree book may be high should be irrelevant.

By the way, in CBM #27 on page 50, there is a picture of Ghost Rider #10 with something stamped on the cover. It is the price "50 øre", which is the equivalent to 5 cents in Danish kroner. This comic book must have been bought in Denmark, and I have numerous American comics with the same stamp. From a "pedigree" collection perhaps...?! Sincerely,

Justm Karlson, Denmark

Perhaps, Justin, perhaps… one never knows! Thanks for your nice letter, it's nice to hear from you, and all the way from Denmark! Woo!? By the by, how much is an Action #1 in Danish kroner?

Pedigree Opinion

Pedigree is a word that is often overused in the comic industry today Although I am a strong advocate of identifying and recognizing collections newly discovered around the country, I do not believe all should be treated as a pedigree. To know the history of a book can be fascinating. When I purchase a copy with a known history, I personally document the background of the book and keep it with it. I highly encourage CBM to write about signficant findings that surface each year (such as the recent Twilight Collection). I hope someone can keep track of these discoveries and document them. The type of collections I feel that are not of significant note are the second generation collections. A difference may be contributors to the comic industry such as Bob Overstreet, because of the important role he has plated in comic collecting. Other notable collections beginning to take off are collections from comic giants such as Bill Gaines, Murphy Anderson, Dick Ayers, Walt Gibson, Jack Kirby, etc. File copies also fall into this category. Of the noted Pedigrees I own or have seen, I would only pay a multiple of guide for a copy from the Edgar Church collection. These books are the only superb run I believe stand out. The supple whiteness of the pages, the near stress free spines, and the fresh odor of the paper are unique for this quantity of Golden Age material. Other less notable pedigrees may find me buying them at or a little above the going rate: but hey, I am more interested in the book's grade, the history is just a nice tidbit of information. I have really been looking forward to this issue on pedigrees and notable collections. Thanks CBM for the idea.

Stephen Ritter, New Mexico

As you can see from our last issue, there are diverse opinions about pedigrees, thanks for yours. I hope other CBM readers will share what they think about this complex aspect of comic book collecting. Thanks to everyone who took the time to correspond… If you'd care to write, send your letters to:

(Please note that CBM reserves the right to edit letters selected for publicaiton for length and/or content.)

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HERE'S WHAT I THINK!

J. KEITH CONTARINO
That's the breaks, folks!

Craig Rader was kind enough to send me a copy of the letter he sent to *CBM* so I could reply. He said he'd like to hear my feelings on your views of the "combination grade" (VG/FN, VF/NM etc.) system, your preference for no split grades, and your feelings about a numerical system.

First, I think a numerical system is, basically, a split grade system. Look at PCE for example. A VF88 is really a VF/NM and a FN55 is really a FN/VF. The problem is, numerical systems such as what you propose and what PCE uses are, by their very nature, attempts at being overly exacting and scientific. It really gets silly when you get up to NM94 vs. NM95... what the hell does that mean?

Craig is absolutely correct when he states I believe grading is an art not a science. It is, and should be. It makes more sense to purchase books from people you know can grade an entire book than from calculator-driven number crunchers. I'll give you a couple of examples.

The Gaines File Copies were declared all MINT, but some MORE mint than others!! Perfect is Perfect. One cannot be better than 100% but here was a declaration that perfection was not an absolute and that one perfect book could be "more perfect" than another. This, of course, is nonsense, but it immediately made others start grading the Gaines books as NM98 or NM/MT 97 or MT96 etc.

In reality, the correct grading system, one that we had all been using for years was in place. Say for example, there were seven Gaines *Mad* #3's. All were stunning but one or two were perfect. They would be graded Mint. Of the remaining five, three were absolutely stunning but had one or two tiny flaws... they would be NM/MT and the other two with near perfect qualities would be NM.

Why fandom decided to start changing something that worked real well-I don't know. But I know this, NM, NM/MT and Mint are a lot easier to understand, and are more meaningful than MT97 vs. MT99.

Another example relates to one of the best known number systems... and is familiar to anyone who has purchased books from PCE. Robert Roter and I have debated his grading system for years and have had many spirited discussions regarding grading. Some years back I ordered an *FF Annual* #2 and *FF Annual* #3 from Robert. You will all recognize these as white cover Marvels. I forgot the exact

grades but I think that *Annual* #3 was graded NM92 and the *Annual* #2 NM85. Regardless, the #3 was graded significantly higher than the #2. Now the problem was this, the #2 had wrinkles on it and a tiny bit of wear but it was white and bright and looked really nice. It was at least VF/NM and possibly NM. The #3 was structurally perfect; square spine, no wear, sharp corners, etc. Unfortunately, it was very yellow.

Robert felt the #3 was structurally flawless. I agreed that was true but for me the yellowing made it grade lower. In short, a "structurally perfect" book looked less desirable to me, especially when I compared it to the bright white "structurally flawed" *Annual* #2 it was ordered with. Yet (and I understand the system) the #3 had to grade higher than the #2 on PCE's scale. Even though it looked worse to me.

I feel that this anomaly is a result of attempting to make grading a science rather than an art. To test my perception, I showed the two books described above to many customers and dealers and, regardless of the actual grades assigned, every one of them evaluated the #2 higher than the #3

Why? Because beauty is truly in the eye of the beholder. No scientific system can take into account the infinite variation of individual books...e.g. yellowing affects *Avengers* #4 five times more detrimentally than a *Daredevil* #7... or that some books never had any "cover gloss" to begin with... or that a slightly rolled spine will kill the appearance of a *Silver Surfer* #4 but not an *FF* #48... or that a perfectly square yet off-center cut with white on the spine side of an *FF* #39 makes it look bad but if it is exactly the same amount off center in the other direction, the book looks great.

These are all examples of the kinds of things experienced graders look at when assessing books. We compare copies we've seen over the years with copies we look at now. I've been told, for example, there are NO *X-Men* #94's without some wear at the staples. Not true! I've seen many over the years but haven't seen one with white pages yet! Why is that? There are plenty of white page *X-Men Giant Size* #1's? Why not a book that came out a month or so later? I don't know but, again, a yellowed #94 looks a lot better than a yellowed *Giant Size X-Men* #1

And what about dust shadows? Or Marvel chips? Or the fact that there are almost no truly NM 10¢ DCs? What do these things do to the grade, or value of the book. You can account for anything in a number crunching system, but it can't tell you WHAT THE BOOK ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE. Comparing grading as science with grading as art is like comparing computer generated music with Beethoven.

I do agree wholeheartedly that over-grading is and has been rampant in our industry. Part of the reason is the huge price discrepancies

between really nice VF's and true, no bull NM's or NM/MT copies. A NM/MT Amazing Fantasy #15 may be worth $50,000 but a solid VF only $15,000. Certainly people are going to want their books to grade out as high as possible.

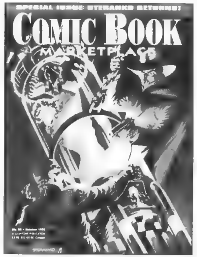
But, that's the breaks folks. Until a grading service is established that is completely independent of sales (which, incidentally, I don't believe will ever happen for numerous reasons) this will continue to occur. All we can hope for is that when disagreements do occur, both parties will be honest and civil and that unhappy purchases get quick and full refunds as long as the book is returned quickly and undamaged.

Well-there's my 22¢ worth (damned inflation!). I too, would like to see lots of letters on grading. Thanks for reading

MICHAEL R. SMITH
Steranko's Influence!

It was with great enthusiasm and interest that I read your recent "All Steranko" issue. But before I get into my primary quibble with the piece—which was excellently presented, by the way—allow me to relate a personal Steranko anecdote which you might find amusing.

I wrote to the artist in 1978 after finding a dog-earred volume of his History of Comics Volume One at a flea market, and discovering that his business (Supergraphics) was located in Reading, PA, less than 70 miles from my home in northern Maryland. I was then 13-years old, an aspiring (though lousy) comic book artist, and, as far as I was concerned, the world's most devoted Steranko fan (Remember: in those days you could get a Cap 111 for about five bucks in near mint, which for my mother was still an astronomical sum to pay for a funnybook!) Along with the cover to History (which I asked him to sign), I sent Jim three or four of my "Best" drawings. Captain America, Nick Fury, etc.—all wretched—and a gushing, overly precocious cover letter. My dad rolled it all up in a mailing tube, plunked it in a mailbox, and that was that.



Almost twenty years later, while in the employ of Diamond Comic Distributors, I listened with keen ears to a variety of "reliable" sources who on occasion took great care to explain to me that Steranko was: a) an egomaniac; b) "difficult"; or c) a self-important-jerk. I didn't believe them... and still don't. Why? Because less than a month after I had sent that package to Supergraphics, I received another poster tube in the mail. Inside: the cover to History of Comics Volume One personalized and signed by Steranko; a signed letter from the artist thanking me for kind words and interest in his work; and (best of all), my drawings—REDRAWN AND INKED BY STERANKO, with critical annotations in the margins!! That's right; then and there, I joined my all-time favorite artist (Jack Kirby) in the ranks of the few esteemed pencilers who have been inked by Jaunty Jim!

All this for a geeky 13-year old kid who needed to get out of the house a little more often. So does this mean Steranko is a saint? Not necessarily. But I can tell you this: I spoke with, met, and interviewed more than my fair share of today's "hot creators" while writing for Previews, and with a few extremely notable exceptions, most were what you'd expect: over-paid, over-praised, self-congratulatory, thoroughly immodest boors, all not-so-tacitly high on their "accomplishments" and "contributions" to the medium. Steranko may feel the same way—though, in his case, one may argue justifiably so. But would any of today's so-called "celebrities" take the time to do what he did... and for free? I seriously doubt it. In my book, Steranko will always be tops, if only because he took the time to encourage and nurture a little kid's dreams. And in the big picture, that has to count for something

Now, on to my gripe with your otherwise excellent Steranko issue: namely, the implication, particularly through the testimonials, that Steranko was an influential comic book artist. Sadly enough, I don't think that's true, for a number of reasons.

First of all, let me dismiss the obvious. While it may indeed be true that Steranko created far too little actual comic book artwork to produce any lasting effect on the medium, what he did produce—in Spencer Tracy's words—was "choice." No, it is not a definitive corpus (a la Kirby or Eisner), but it is beautiful by any standard worth mentioning. Still, one is tempted by the brevity of Steranko's tenure at the top to ask the most obvious question: how great a body of work would his have been if, for example, he were cranking out The Avengers, Iron Man, and Millie the Model while simultaneously working on Nick Fury #3? It's hard to say. But it's also the wrong question to ask, because a great artist isn't measured by volume alone: if that were true, then by such reckoning Michelangelo can be called a rotten painter of ceiling frescoes, which is absurd!

So, no, Steranko's influence cannot be evaluated solely by his (comparative) lack of output. What I would like to propose instead is that Steranko—far from being an influential innovator—was in fact comics' first neo-classicist, and that his importance rests not upon what he demonstrated could be done with the medium, but rather upon what he showed could be learned from what had been done in the medium. That lesson has been summarily ignored by this a-historically minded generation of artists (the Liefeld's, McFarlane's, et. al.) does not in any way negate its significance, nor detract from its fundamental truth

In many ways, an artist like Neal Adams was more influential and more innovative than Steranko. Think about it: for decades, comic books looked, for lack of a better word, "cartoony." Action and anatomy were exaggerated; comedy was slapstick; and drama (what there was of it), was typically written with a capital MELO (drama). Simon and Kirby's work is the most obvious example, but running close second is the work like Charles Biro, Al Avison, Jerry Robinson, et. al. Even Will Eisner's best work during the '40s, for all of its Citizen Kane-inspired cinematic inventiveness, was still. .well, "comic booky" (look at

Commissioner Dolan, or Ebony). Slick, semi-realistic stylists like Lou Fine and Jack Burnley—and later, Wally Wood and Reed Crandall—are notable exceptions, but that's the point: They're exceptions, not the rule.

Then along came Neal Adams, and suddenly "realism" took center stage. Nobody had done it before, nor so well. That's innovation. Adams turned comic book artwork on its ear, and knocked everyone else on their collective ass. (It's a grand testimony to Adams' enduring influence that some of the modern period's most successful comic book artists are products of the Adams era and mentality: e.g., George Perez, John Byrne, Frank Miller (look at his early work), Jim Lee, etc.

Steranko, on the other hand, had a similarly explosive effect on the comic book industry of his day, but for very different reasons. While Adams did what had never been done before (creating oxymoronic "realistic" comic book heroes), Steranko's work seemed to say, "Wait a second. Comics don't need to be more like life. They need to be less like it, and more authentically like what they in fact are: a unique type of exaggerated artistic expression which, in its classical form, is governed by certain conventions: exaggerated (though at its best, architecturally impeccable) anatomy; over the top action; unabashed melodrama, etc." But that wasn't a new idea, really. Kirby, Eisner, Guardineer, Everett, Burgos, et. al. figured that out way back in the forties while conjuring this peculiar American art form from the stuff of the pulps, the Saturday matinee, and the Sunday comics page. They invented the vocabulary of the comics; Steranko simply showed everyone that you could still speak it and not come off sounding like Alistar Cooke at a Bowery Boys convention. Steranko's work looked fresh simply because no-one had seen its like over twenty years—not since the days of Captain America and Star Spangled Comics, Police Comics and Shield-Wizard, Hit Comics and Marvel Mystery. Did he merely imitate the Golden Age greats? Sometimes (compare the composition of his double-page spreads in Captain America with Simon and Kirby's in, say, Stuntman #2). But what he did best was capture the spirit of the Golden Age, when every page, every pose, every scene seemed brand new because it was. No small achievement, especially for an artist laboring nearly thirty years after the fact.

Of course, it took a man of Steranko's tremendous gifts, fierce drive, and storied background to pull it off. Not unlike the Renaissance masters, Steranko distilled the original essence of a long-dead art-form from a pen and pencil driven by talent, hard work, and (most importantly) sheer love for what had gone on before. Then, of course, he went the masters one better, which is to merely overstate the obvious and say that no Golden Age comic looks quite like Tower of Shadows #1. Thus, far from being nostalgic curiosity, his work actually represented continuity with the tradition of exaggerated, bravura artwork that began with Simon and Kirby, Will Eisner, Jack Cole, and others—an era which died with the Golden Age itself, and which was buried, for better or worse, by Adams and the other realists.

Unfortunately, Steranko's lesson is one which few contemporary artists are capable of learning. For every Dave Stevens, we are still plagued by a thousand Rob Liefeld's. The adage applies: the only lesson we have ever learned from history is that we never learn any lessons from history. Comic artwork's lowest-common denominator is still extremely low, and not even Steranko's Herculean performance could elevate it, then or now.

So, tragically, no. Steranko was not influential, if we measure his influence by what we see reflected of it on the newsstand today. In fact, looking at his work in comparison to today's mediocre standard should remind us of how tremendously weak his impact actually was. Yet, fans still praise him, still covet his work, still count him among the all-time greats. Beyond the obvious reason (he was, and still is, damn good), why? Perhaps it's because Steranko abandoned comics at the height of his prowess, which tempts us to assign to his work more weight than it should by all rights carry. Cherishing what little we have, we are compelled to ask "what might have been" because, as with Rimbaud or Hendrix, we'll never, ever know. (What makes such feelings all that much more vivid, of course, is the fact that—unlike Rimbaud or Hendrix—Steranko is still alive.) Or perhaps we are intrigued by Steranko because he was very much a lone voice, crying in the wilderness: an artist both ahead of his time and ahead of the pack. But like many a biblical prophet, he was not honored in what should have been his home country (comic books), possibly because he could in fact claim no artistic country his own—not magic, commercial art, music, nor least of all comics; dallying in all, he never really settled in any. Or maybe we love the guy because, as it's been said of Dali, his greatest artistic creation was, without a doubt, himself.

In many ways, it's tempting to look at Jim Steranko not as one of the most triumphant figures in comic book history, but instead as one of the most tragic, as a "wunderkind" of unlimited potential who flashed brilliantly, dazzled mightily, and then faded into untimely obscurity. Tempting, but ultimately misleading. The problem isn't that Steranko didn't realize his vast potential as an artist and a storyteller; it's that he did, and that the mainstream comic book business—bloated by conformity, ignorant of its past, and always dubious of its future—couldn't have cared less.

SHAWN HAMILTON
Time is running out!

Time is running out! For those of us who read Comic Book Marketplace and truly care about comics, the time has come to make the most important decision that fandom has ever been asked to make. Are comics a legitimate art form and an important part of our history, or are they only a commodity to be bought and sold like any other? If we decide that comics are an investment only, then obviously pertinent information regarding the early years of comics, etc. should be closely guarded ammunition to leverage one's position in the marketplace. I fully understand this position and I do not condemn any person who feels this way.

If we decide that comics are a legitimate art form, then we will have to seriously rethink the direction and purpose of fandom in the near future. We will have to follow the examples of pioneer fans such as Jim Vadeboncoeur and Jerry Bails, as well as the countless others. We will have to realize that we are in the unique position of being able to accurately document comics beginnings and record the achievements of those artists who created these four color masterpieces. Not only can we do this, but we will be obligated to do so for future generations. Imagine if concise records had been kept of every detail of the Italian Renaissance

how indebted we would be to those people who took upon themselves the responsibility to record what they knew for posterity. Although this may be a lofty comparison, I do not feel that this is an inaccurate one.

Why is this so important to decide now? Why is time running out? Because some of those artists, editors, and publishers are still with us today, but they won't be forever. With them will go not only the irreplaceable information that they have, but also the chance for us to recognize them for their contributions.

What I propose is a free exchange of any and all information, complete or incomplete so that fandom can collectively fill in the gap.

• Writer, artist, and general index information could be made available to all fans so that any errors could be corrected now.

• Circulation records, publishers files, etc. that are in private hands should be published for open study.

• Golden Age comics could be transferred to CD-ROM so that large runs of a publisher would become truly affordable. This would also preserve these fragile paper treasures for future generations.

• Existing databases such as Overstreet could be used to create a record of creator credits. This information would not become obsolete and is sorely needed.

• Most importantly, a mass movement by fandom to convince comic publishers or fandom itself to reprint unavailable material, not in a high-priced archival version, but in a low cost accessible format. (Russ Cochran's EC Comics or Bruce Hamilton's Disney comics are a perfect example).

There are numerous other ways to accomplish this goal, perhaps CBM could expand its page count to make room for this type of hard data. Hopefully, by giving credit to those people who have done so much work already and by recognizing that there is much more work to be done, that we can all look back one day and feel that we have made the right decision, at the right time, before time ran out!

To accomplish this we have started a local organization… the Association of Comicbook Enthusiasts (ACE). Our mailing address is A.C.E., 549 Denmark Street, Louisville, Kentucky 40215. Please contact us if you support these ideas. Thanks.

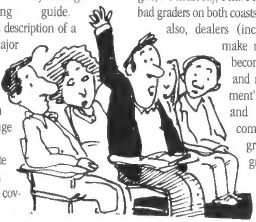
TIM COLLINS
Grading Soapbox

Here's my two bits on grading comic books: The more information passed on to the customer, the better! I use not only split grades but occasionally pluses and minuses. I also include in my catalogs a detailed grading guide. Furthermore, in the description of a comic, I will note major and sometimes minor defects. As we all know, a "Good" comic can be good for a huge variety of reasons.

I try to always note stains, subscription creases, writing on covers, date stamps, and many other things. This usually avoids disappointment on behalf of the customer. I also thinks that sometimes this works to my short term detriment. If I list a book as Good with a stain on the back cover, it is much less likely to sell that if I just listed it as Good with no explanation. However, in the long term, I have far far fewer returns and many more happy customers.

I have found that there are a zillion dealers and thus a zillion different grading methods. As for the Overstreet/Carter Numerical System: I'll bet that no ten dealers could grade any comic book and come up with a number within five points of each other, let alone the exact same number! Furthermore, the Grading Guide doesn't cover everything (e. g. scuffing and the dreaded "perfect" book with one flaw).

I think the time may be coming for an independent grading association that certifies dealers and collectors. With such certification, a standard will be set and collectors and dealers alike will know what they are getting and thus be protected. I have heard the apparent old adage, "West Coast VG is East Coast NM" (the farther west you go the more strict the grading gets). I must say, I have found both good and bad graders on both coasts and in-between and also, dealers (including myself) do make mistakes. As comics become more expensive and more of an "investment" the prudent buyer and dealer will buy comics from under-graders and over-graders will disappoint and hurt the hobby. ■



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The Missing CAT-MAN!

This month's Unseen Gold features one of the most rare, sought-after covers absent from the *Photo-Journal... Cat-Man* #13! Similar to *Flash* #56, *Cat-Man* #13 is fervently pursued by many collectors because of its absence from *Gerber*, and few ever get a chance to obtain a copy. What is so special about this book?

BY MATT NELSON

Another reason Cat-Man Comics are so highly-coveted is that they are members of the rare Holyoke/Continental family of publications. King of "off-brand" Golden Age comics, this company produced many of the most sought-after comics on the esoteric market today. Their titles, such as *Suspense, Terrific, Captain Aero,* and *Cat-Man* exhibit some of the most desirable covers by industry greats, such as Alex Schomburg and the late L.B. Cole. Also, due to the relatively obscure nature of this company, their comics are quite scarce and usually bring a premium when copies do surface.

Cat-Mans are especially hot items right now, not only because of their broad variety of contributing artists, but also because they are extremely scarce, with a nearly impossible 32-issue run that is hell to complete. And adding to the general difficulty of an already difficult task is the "hidden" *Cat-Man* #13, a book that is so unknown that it is almost achieved a "cult" status!

Displaying a bondage/torture cover reminiscent of early Captain America covers, *Cat-Man* #13 can command a hefty price... IF it is offered for sale. In a recent auction, a VG+ copy brought $700—almost 14x *Guide*!! And at the San Diego Con this past year, another VG copy sold for $600!

These record prices are really not surprising when you consider that these were the only two copies to publicly sell in a long, long time! Even when the Mile High run of *Cat-man's* went on the auction block at Sotheby's in 1992, issue #13 was mysteriously missing... although one does, presumably, exist.

Gerber ranks the scarcity of *Cat-Man* #13 as a 9 (six to ten existing copies) while many other surrounding issues rank an 8 or 7 on the scarcity index. And many collectors

confirm this… there doesn't seem to be much doubt— *Cat-Man*s are really tough to find!

In other installments of Unseen Gold I've suggested that patience will eventually lead to success… not so with this one! Throw patience to the wind and prepare to [illegible] big bucks should you be lucky enough to have a copy of Cat-Man #13 "waltz" across your path. Seems there's only one way to skin a *Cat-Man* #13… a little luck and a lot of money! ■